

Ultra Clutch

by Obviously Insane

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Summary: Is it charm? Is it poise? No, it's Hairspray! A collection of vignettes about Baltimore's most musical residents.

## 1. Life Was Just A Hostess Snack

Ultra-Clutch

Penny Pingleton looked down at the dirty streets of Baltimore as she walked, hand in hand with Seaweed J. Stubbs. It wasn't that she was ashamed of her new boyfriend; on the contrary, she was excited to be dating him—it was just that if her mother caught them Penny didn't even want to think about that.

"What's the matter?" Seaweed asked, staring at Penny's nervous expression.

Penny shook her head. "Nothing. It's just my mother. She's—" "

"Yeah, I know," he said, trailing off. "Listen; if you wanna come down to my mom's house, we're havin' a party and everything for Inez, so—" "

"No, it's okay," Penny interrupted. "I have to face my mom sometime—and if I stay out any later, she'll break out the Psalms record."

Seaweed gave her a puzzled look, and Penny rolled her eyes.

"Don't ask," she said, and Seaweed grinned.

"Wasn't going to," Seaweed answered. When they turned the corner and neared her house, Penny let go of Seaweed's hand.

"It's probably for the best she doesn't know right now," she explained, and although Seaweed looked hurt, he said, "Yeah, I guess so."

"I'll see you tomorrow, okay?" she asked, and Seaweed nodded.

"You're sure you don't want to come down to the party?" Seaweed checked, staring at her front door. Penny could hear her mom ranting, and a few neighbors had gathered on the sidewalk to see what the commotion was about.

Penny nodded. "Yes, I think I'm in enough trouble already," she said, starting to walk towards her front steps. After a few moments, she froze.

"Seaweed?" she called. He turned around mid-step.

"Yeah, baby?" he said smoothly, straightening out his sweater. He was hoping she would change her mind and come with him.

"You don't think my mom saw the Miss Teenage Hairspray pageant on TV, do you?"

Seaweed shook his head. "Nah, I wouldn't worry about it."

"Okay," Penny breathed, and looked visibly relieved. "Thanks. Good night!"

He nodded, and turned to walk home. Penny sighed, walked up to her door, and turned the doorknob.

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"And that \_scoundrel\_! You kissed him on \_TV\_! I don't want to hear another peep out of you, do you understand?"

Penny was tied down to her mattress for the second time that night. She sighed and rolled her eyes.

"Yes, mother."

"Don't take that tone with me," Prudy said tersely, and she shut Penny's bedroom door behind her.

Penny glared after her for a few moments, and then turned her attention onto the phonograph on her end table, which was currently belting some prayers of forgiveness and mercy.

"I wish Seaweed were here to save me," she whispered, and hoping that somehow he would sense she was trapped and come to rescue her.

But after an hour of waiting, Penny finally realized that wasn't going to happen. She was beginning to grow tired, but she couldn't sleep due to the jump rope cutting into her arm. And she knew she couldn't just wriggle herself free; her mother was an experienced discipliner, and had learned to tie her knots so tightly that even a master knots-man would be impressed.

Penny turned to face the window and eyed everyone outside with envy. She hoped maybe someone would see her tied to her bed and ring the doorbell, or \_something\_. But she realized with a sigh that she was used to this; it wasn't \_so \_bad. Her mom usually only did this for

two or three hours, but that was before. Penny's mother had seen the pageant, and she was outraged to find that her daughter was, as Penny put it, a 'checkerboard chick'.

She heard footsteps outside of her door and braced herself for another round of her mother's tirades. The door opened slowly, and Penny looked down at the floor. But instead of seeing her mother's loafers, she saw a pair of cherry red bowling shoes.

"Seaweed!" she exclaimed, and then mentally scolded herself for being so loud. Seaweed walked over to her.

"Hey, baby," he said smoothly, apparently unfazed by the sight of his girlfriend tied to her bed.

Penny grinned. "Seaweed," she whispered, "you shouldn't have come here! My mom will probably be coming in to check on me in a few minutes."

Seaweed just shook his head. "Hey, baby. I'm your knight in shinin' armor, and all that. Just let me untie you and we'll go ridin' off into the sunset on my white horse." He nodded his head in the direction of his beat-up car.

Penny laughed softly as Seaweed pulled out his switchblade. "You know, it's kinda funny. I've never used this thing before in all the years I lived in the ghetto, and now that I'm hangin' around a bunch of white people, I've already pulled this baby out more times than I can count."

Penny stayed silent for a few moments and scowled.

"Is something wrong?" Seaweed asked, furrowing his eyebrows. Penny's eyes widened and she slammed her hand over Seaweed's mouth.

"Mmph?" he mumbled against her palm, and she sent him a look that instantly silenced him. She raised her finger to her lips, signaling for him to stay quiet as she got up and headed for the door. Opening it slowly, she stuck her head into the hallway. Seaweed watched her immediately tense and rush over to him.

"\_Mother\_," she mouthed, and his eyes widened along with hers. He gave her a look of questioning and she gestured toward the window. Seaweed nodded and quickly hopped out and crawled down her trellis, Penny right behind him. When they reached the bottom, Seaweed grabbed her hand and they ran down the street, laughing hysterically. As they rounded the corner, Seaweed stopped and rested against a fire hydrant.

"So," Seaweed started, as soon as he caught his breath. "Wanna go to my mom's after all?"

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Thanks so much for reading! The next chapter is going to be a little more focused on Tracy. Reviews make me happy. :)

## 2. Tracy, It's Up To You

## Ultra Clutch

Tracy Turnblad adjusted her starch-white shirt so that it covered her stomach and looked in the mirror.

"Not it's best, but it'll do," she observed to herself, poking at her voluminous hairstyle. Tracy snatched her backpack from the kitchen table and strapped it on, grabbing an apple from the counter walking out the door.

She made her way towards the bus stop and found herself wishing she'd worn more comfortable shoes; she had put on her mother's new high heels, trying to impress Link. Even though they were already together, Tracy was paranoid that he would suddenly realize he's with \_Tracy Turnblad\_, change his mind, and go back to Amber.

'I would if I were him,' she thought, frowning. 'She's blonde, and skinny, and perfect, andâ€"!''

"Tracy?"

Tracy spun around and squealed with joy as her best friend, Penny Pingleton approached. She had, as usual, a sucker in her mouth. But this morning she also had Seaweed J. Stubbs accompanying her. Or being dragged along by her, depending on who you ask.

"Hi!" Tracy squeaked.

Penny smiled. "Hi," she said back, and then gave Tracy a strange look. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm swell," Tracy answered, confused. "Why do you ask?"

Seaweed shook his head. "Because you're holding a crushed apple in your hands."

Tracy furrowed her eyebrows and glanced down at her hand. Her palm was closed in a tight fist and apple juice was spilling out from between her fingers.

"Oh," she muttered, and tossed the apple into a nearby trash can. As she wiped her palm on her skirt, Seaweed sent her a look of questioning.

"Why are you mashing fruit, girl?" he asked, still staring at her in bewilderment.

Tracy sighed. "Oh. I was just thinking aboutâ€|history. You knowâ€|the test today and everything."

Penny raised her eyebrows. "You never worry about tests. You never even \_know\_ about tests. What's wrong, Tracy?"

When Tracy stayed silent, Penny huffed. "We've been best friends since we were in diapers, and you can't even tell me what's going onâ€"!"

"Link is gonna leave me for Amber because she's pretty and skinny and perfect and evil and I'm just an idiot and they're gonna be kissing

in his car, and she'll get the prize, and I want the prize! And then they're gonna get married on the Corny Collins Show and all I get to do is sit there and watch with a big fat smile on my big fat face! And then they'll have fifty gorgeous children that will all be rich and famous and perfect! And you know where I'm gonna be? I'm gonna be living all alone in a run-down apartment in Long Island with three hundred cats that'll eat me when I die! I don't wanna be eaten by cats, Penny!"

Seaweed and Penny stared at their friend in shock. Tracy just slammed her head into Seaweed's shoulder sobbing, and he awkwardly patted her on the back.

"Tracy, that's not going to happen," Penny assured her.

Seaweed turned to his girlfriend. "You understood all that? 'Cuz all I heard was something about cats."

Tracy just started blubbering louder, and Penny scowled at him. "Seaweed, how can you be so insensitive? Tracy is going through a lot right now."

"Yeah, a whole lot of bull," Seaweed snorted, and Tracy looked up at him, snarling.

"What?" Seaweed said, shooting her a look that was far from apology. "You really think Cracker Boy is gonna go back to Amber Von Tussle? Really, girl, and I thought they were wrong for trying to send you to Special Ed."

Tracy sighed. "Well, you can't blame me for worrying," she breathed, ignoring the strange looks she was receiving by the students standing around her. "Amber isâ€"!"

"Cruel?" Penny interrupted. "Maniacal? A plastic spastic? Why would Link even think about getting back together with her?"

Tracy shook her head. "I don't know. I guess I was being stupid," she said, smiling.

Seaweed grinned at her. "Hey, we all have days like that."

"Let's get on the bus before it leaves without us," Penny said, clutching Seaweed's arm with one hand and Penny's with the other. "My mother's already upset with me, and the last thing I need is to be truant."

Seaweed, Penny, and Tracy boarded the bus, and headed to the back seat so that they could all sit together. Once they had settled, Seaweed put his arm around Penny. Tracy suddenly felt left out, and consoled herself by pretending that Link was next to her, holding her hand and asking her about what she wanted to do that night, like Seaweed was doing with Penny. She felt guilty about being jealous of her best friend, but she couldn't help it.

The bus halted, and students pushed into each other to get off of the bus; not because they were eager to get to school, but because of the stale odor of the bus-driver. Penny and Seaweed had their arms wrapped around each other as they exited, and Tracy wondered silently how they managed to get off the bus without breaking contact.

Tracy followed them as they walked to history class, although they weren't too good for conversation as they were kissing fervently. Most of the students they passed stared in shock at the interracial couple, while the other half were too preoccupied with their hair to care.

Turning the corner to her classroom, Tracy decided to just desert Penny and Seaweed and sit in the back row of chairs. Moments after she had set her things down, Mr. Parro walked in and looked at her in surprise.

"Tracy Turnblad? You're early," he said, almost questioning it.

Tracy nodded sadly. "Yes, I have nothing better to do."

Mr. Parro looked slightly taken aback by this. "Well...do you have all of your homework done?" he asked, obviously feeling awkward. Tracy wasn't exactly studious.

"Nope," she answered, and instead of pulling out her notebook like he expected her to, she just sat there.

"Well, then. I suppose," he said uncomfortably, and then just decided to sit down at his desk and grade papers.

The two just sat in silence, Tracy staring at him. She felt sorry for Mr. Parro; even though he always behaved like he was raised by Velma Von Tussle, Tracy still felt bad that he didn't have any friends; even his fellow teachers couldn't stand him, and that's why he retreated to the safety of his classroom. There, he could dull the pain of loneliness with power.

Their isolation, however, was interrupted when the bell rang and a myriad of students poured into the classroom, filling the silent room with the chatter. Tracy could almost understand why Mr. Parro got upset when his pupils made too much noise.

Tracy opened her book to pretend to take notes on one of Mr. Parro's endless lectures when a shadow gloomed over her. She looked up and found the devil herself; Amber Von Tussle.

"Well, what do we have here?" Amber cooed mockingly, and her minions chortled, their identical appearances flawless.

Tracy ignored her and started digging in her backpack for a pencil.

"Listen, blubber thighs, you're sitting in my seat," Amber snarled, crossing her arms. Tracy felt her face go red in anger, but kept silent. Her father had always taught her that you shouldn't retaliate to bullies.

"So move your lard-load over," Amber said, becoming impatient. Tracy stayed seated, but looked up at Amber's face for the first time.

Before she got a chance to say anything, however, a pair of blindingly-blue eyes stared at her over the crowd of under-fed

teenage girls.

Tracy thanked God that she was sitting down, because she could feel her knees start to weaken and her head start to spin. Link was winking at \_her\_. \_Tracy\_ \_Turnblad\_.

"Hey, darlin', mind if I join you?" he asked, not waiting for a response before he sat down on the desk next to her.

"You're looking mighty pretty today," Link said, lifting her chin with his hand.

Amber huffed and spun on her heel to go sit in the next row up, her cronies following closely behind.

"Thanks, Link," Tracy gushed, and cringed at how high-pitched her voice had become. She could feel her face growing hot and she silently prayed that Link wouldn't notice she was blushing.

Link shot another one of his trademark winks her way. "Anytime, babe."

Tracy practically swooned, and tried to say something funny or flirty orâ€|well, anything. But she couldn't. She just goggled at him as he took off his jacket and hung it on his seat.

"You solid?" Link asked, confused by her expression.

Tracy nodded, this time regaining the ability to speak. "Yeah, just tired. I couldn't fall asleep last night."

"Same over at my place," Link said quietly, and then looked down. "Do you, uhâ€|do you maybe wannaâ€|go someplace tonight?"

Tracy smiled. "Yes! I meanâ€|that would be nifty," she said. It was just like all of her fantasies. Well, not exactly, but that was probably for the better. She didn't want him thinking she was easy, or anything.

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Hope you enjoyed this chapter!

### 3. Welcome to the '60s

#### Ultra Clutch

Edna Turnblad watched the clock impatiently as she had been for several hours now, ever since her daughter had gone to the drive-in with Link. It wasn't that she didn't trust him, although his wink still occasionally left her frazzled. It was just the fact that this was Tracy's first real date, unless you count the time she went on a play-date to Jimmy Moore's house across the street when she was seven. Except Tracy had ended up running home crying, so Edna guessed that didn't really count.

"Edna, are you still up?"

Wilbur Turnblad shuffled into the kitchen and turned on the light,

rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

"Come to bed," he croaked, leaning against the door frame.

Edna shook her head. "There's still twenty minutes to go before Tracy's curfew, and I want to make sure she comes home on time."

Wilbur rolled his eyes. "Edna, sweetie, Link is a good boy."

"But they're going to the \_drive-in\_, Willy. Don't you know what happens at a \_drive-in? \_Drive-ins are absolutely the worst place a teenaged girl can go! There's sex, and drugs, and processed food!"

"Edna," Wilbur started softly, "I think you're overreacting."

"No, I'm not!" Edna said sternly, raising her voice. "I don't want my little girl turning into someâ€|sex pot!"

Wilbur raised his eyebrows. "Sex pot?"

"Well, it's what the kids are saying these days, Wilbur. Get with the times," she replied, standing up from her seat and heading to the coffee pot.

"Edna, I...our girl is growing up."

Edna's face grew red, and she turned around to face her husband so quickly she nearly got whiplash. "WHAT? Are you saying that you'd be \_okay \_with it if sheâ€|if sheâ€|I can't even say it!"

"Honey, I'm not saying that."

"Do you know what they call drive-in theaters? \_Passion pits\_! Can you believe that? I shouldn't have agreed to let her go, Willy. He's going to deflower her!"

Wilbur tried to hold in his laughter. "Deflower?"

"Wellâ€|I can't believe you're laughing at a time like this! I mean, your daughter could beâ€|"

"I'm home!"

Edna's eyes popped out of her head when she heard her daughter call out cheerfully. She pushed her husband out of the way and scuffled quickly to the front door.

"Tracy! Did he touch you?" Edna yelled, checking her daughter for loose buttons and messy hair.

"Uh, nice to see you too, Ma," Tracy said, rolling her eyes.

Wilbur put a hand on his daughter's shoulder. "Your mother was worried about you."

Tracy sighed. "Ma, relax. I'm gonna go to bed."

"Why?" Edna questioned, clutching Tracy's hand. "Are you tired? Did



you have a \_fun\_ time?"

"Yeah, Link and I had a good time. Can I go to sleep now?"

Edna's yes widened considerably. "Tracy, did you\_ have sex \_with that boy?"

Tracy scoffed. "\_What\_? Ma, you're acting like Penny's mom."

"Answer the question, Tracy!"

"No! Jeez, ma. You're flippin' your lid," Tracy mumbled as she walked away, heading to her room.

Edna fell back onto the couch, and Wilbur joined her.

"Well, Wilbur," Edna whispered. "Apparently, I'm \_flippin' my lid\_."

"Oh, honey," Wilbur cooed. "Don't feel sad. You just worry too much."

Edna shook her head. "I know. But it's my jobâ€|oh! I plum forgot! I promised Link that I'd finish his laundry order by tomorrow. They really need a woman in that house, Wilbur. Would you mind handing me their laundry bag?"

Wilbur reached over behind him and sorted through all of the bags until her settled on a bright blue sack.

"Thank you, honey," she said, digging through it. "Now, he said that I didn't have toâ€|why is there a \_bra\_ in here?"

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Hope you enjoyed this!

#### 4. That Tango's Child's Play

Ultra Clutch

"And you're sure that bra isn't Tracy's?"

Link had spent the last hour trying to convince Tracy's mom that the bra she found in his laundry bag wasn't Tracy's, and that it probably belonged to one of his dad's dates. It wasn't going too well.

"Yes, Mrs. Turnblad. I'm sure. I'm not like that."

There was a clucking noise on the other line. "Okay. Wellâ€|I'm still not too sure. I mean, for goodness sakesâ€|no, Tracy, I'm not talking to Link. I'm not!"

Link grinned as he listened to Tracy and Edna argue, shouting to each other about privacy and personal space.

"Tracy! Give me back the phone! Traâ€|"

The call was disconnected, and the sounds of two women yelling were

replaced by a gaudy dial tone. Link put the phone back gently on the receiver and walked into his room. His father joked about how it looked like a shrine to Tracy Turnblad; there were pictures of her covering his walls, and even a few of those 'Tracy Dolls' Mr. Turnblad had given him were sitting on his dresser.

Link took the photo that he kept on his nightstand and sat on his bed. It was of Tracy and him, taken by her friend Penny. His head was completely cut out of the shot, and it looked like Tracy was sitting on the roof of Link's car with a headless guy, but Link kept it anyways. She was flashing a 'real smile' as opposed to the 'fake-smiles' people usually had in photos. That's one of the things he liked about her; she was almost always happy.

He was definitely taken aback when Mrs. Turnblad interrogated him on his plans with Tracy. She had flat out asked if he had 'deflowered' her. It took him awhile to figure out what 'deflowering' was; images of him stealing flowers out of Tracy's hands filled his mind before he realized what she meant, and he profusely denied it. During the rest of their conversation, however, he couldn't help wishing he had; this was, of course, immediately dismissed from his imagination as his conscience kicked in.

Their date earlier had been one of the most awkward he had ever had; they couldn't see the screen because a Woody Wagon had parked in front of them, the surfboards blocking their view. Tracy had a near-allergic reaction to the popcorn, which made Link feel guilty because he had practically forced her to eat some. And every single car around them held people copping feels and going all the way, while Tracy and Link just sat and talked about things Link couldn't even remember now.

In all honesty, he had spent the whole night thinking about kissing her; he knew that it was a horrible cliché to kiss at a drive-in theater, but that's all he could focus on. He hadn't kissed her since the Miss Teenage Hairspray pageant, and that was nearly a week ago. However, it was one thing to kiss someone in the excitement and exhilaration they both felt at that moment; it was quite another to pucker up when you were surrounded by cigarette smoke and the sound of Lina Lamont's voice.

The phone rang again, and Link got up to answer it. He expected it to be his dad, telling him he wouldn't be home before dinner because he 'had to stay late at the office; too much paperwork'. Which, in Mr. Larkin's terms, translated to, 'My buddy from work hooked me up with this real easy chick'.

It wasn't his father, though; it was Tracy.

"Link?" Her voice called through the receiver. Link smiled.

"Hey, Trace."

"Did my mom call you earlier?" she asked, causing Link to laugh.

"Uh, yeah. She cares about you a lot, babe."

"I guess so. What exactly did she ask you about?"

"Uhâ€|" Link stuttered, trying to think of something. He definitely did not want to tell her that her mother had basically been asking about how far they'd gone, especially not after the fight he overheard them having.

"You know, just stuff."

"Just stuff?" Tracy's voice sounded skeptical. "What kind of stuff?"

"Laundry." Link shook his head the second the word left his mouth; it was probably the lamest thing he could've come up with. But it was the closest thing to the truth; she did ask him about his laundry. He just decided to leave out the bra and subsequent interrogation part.

"Laundry?" Tracy repeated.

"Yeah. You knowâ€|ironing. Pleating. Detergents. That kind of thing. It's actually kinda neat."

There was a long pause on Tracy's end of the conversation. "She asked you about the date, didn't she?" she finally muttered.

Just as Link was about to answer, he heard a struggle through the receiver. For a moment he was horrified, thinking that a burglar had broken into the Turnblad's home. But then, as if it were dÃ©jÃ  vu, he heard the sound of her mother's voice yelling.

"Tracy! I was not talking to Link! Now get off the phone!"

"If you weren't talking to him, than what do you have to hide?"

"Nothing! Get off the phoneâ€|your father is expecting a call!"

"Ma! Give me back the phone!"

"No!"

"Ma, he's probably just sitting there, wondering where I went! He's gonna know my family is insane! And he's gonna break up with me 'cuz he won't wanna marry into a crazy family!"

"Tracy! Stop pinching me!"

"Give me the phone!"

"You are impossible!"

"\_Give me the phone\_!"

"\_Stop pinching me\_!"

"Not until you give me the phone!"

"Uhâ€|Tracy? Mrs. Turnblad?" Link spoke loudly, and the shouting match stopped.

"Give me the phone; he's still on the line!" There was a lot of

static as the phone was shuffled around, until finally Tracy had gotten a hold of it.

She let out a deep breath. "Sorry about that."

â€|

Hello, all of my bitchin' reviewers! (bitchin' is a good thing, by the way: I had to explain to my friend that I wasn't actually calling her a bitch when I said that. Some people just don't pick up on '60s lingo.) You guys are so great, thanks for all the feedback. I hope this chapter satisfied ya'll. I might not be updating as often as I have been due to school, but I promise I'll try to keep pounding chapters out as quickly as possible in my last precious week of vacation. i•Š

## 5. A Bad, Bad Boy

### Ultra Clutch

Seaweed stared at the clock in detention hall, eyes glazed over with boredom. The old detention monitor was replaced after the school board discovered that he was embezzling money from their funds to start a nightclub. His successor was one of the dumbest people Seaweed had ever met in his life. His name was Mr. Bosely, and Seaweed guessed that he was seventy years old, give or take.

And for some strange reason, his lecture was directed mainly at Seaweed. He figured it might've had something to do with the fact that he had placed a nail on Mr. Bosely's chair earlier, but then again, maybe not.

"You see, Mr. Stubbs," the old man rambled in monotone, "You see, when you break the rules, you have to face the consequences for your actions. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction, you see. You are bad for breaking the rules. That makes you a bad boy. A bad, bad boy. \_A bad, bad boy.\_ Rules are not meant to be broken. They are there for a purpose, you see; it is what makes our society soâ€|"

Seaweed's head slipped from the hand he was propping it up against, and it hit the desk with a loud thump. The cold table felt good against his forehead, as Mr. Bosely had closed all of the windows and the room was so stuffy, everyone was sweating. Seaweed started to zone out of Mr. Bosely's lecture and he felt his eyes grow insanely heavy.

Mr. Bosely had only spoken for a few more minutes, however, when the bell to let detention out rang, and everyone sprang out of their seats, rushing for the door. Seaweed pushed his way through the crowds and immediately started looking for Penny. She had agreed to wait for him after school, but he couldn't see her anywhere.

But when the masses had parted, he spotted her sitting over by the water fountain. With Tracy and Link.

Sure, he liked Tracy. And Link? Well, he could be a cool cat most of the time, when he wasn't looking in the mirror. But lately, Seaweed and Penny had never gotten any time to their selves because she would

keep inviting Tracy and Link to come along with them wherever they went. When they went to the movies? Tracy and Link brought the popcorn. When they went down to the beach? Tracy and Link brought the towels.

"Hey, baby," Seaweed said smoothly, plopping himself down onto the bench.

"Hi," Penny said quietly, giving him a peck on the cheek. He noticed out of the corner of his eye that Tracy looked at Link, and Link looked at the ground.

"Soâ€¦" Seaweed started, trying to make conversation. "You guys wanna go for some ice cream, or something?"

Tracy beamed. "Oh, that sounds great!"

"There's this bitchin' place over on Peyton Place," Seaweed told them, and Link winced.

"My old man said I'm not supposed to go over there anymore," he said, causing Seaweed to shoot him a glare.

"Cracker Boy, you'll be fine. And since when did you care about what your 'daddy' says?"

Link shrugged, and then stood up simultaneously with Tracy, as if they were joined at the hip.

"I guess what he doesn't know won't hurt him," Link muttered, and Tracy stared up at him like he was her god.

Seaweed grabbed Penny's hand and the four of them started walking down the street. On their way, a few drivers honked at them and flipped them off, to which Seaweed just returned the favor, causing Penny to blush and hit him on the shoulder.

Link and Tracy spent the whole time talking about dance moves, and Seaweed kept rolling his eyes and cracking jokes about them to Penny.

"You guys, we're here," Seaweed said as they finally reached the ice cream parlor.

"Hey, babe," Link started to say something to Tracy, but she interrupted him by grabbing his hand and jerking him forward into the store. Penny started to follow them when Seaweed grabbed her hand and pulled her back.

"What are you doing?" she whispered as he practically dragged her to an alleyway behind the parlor. He backed her up against the cold brick wall and leaned in, her hot breath tickling his nose. Penny gasped as he pressed his lips on hers, pushing her harder against the wall.

He pulled his head back. "Being a bad, bad boy."

â€¦

Hello, my totally bitchin' reviewers! You guys are so amazingly

awesome, it's scary. Thanks so much for the \*\*20\*\* reviews that this story currently has. That is so great! I was only expected 2 or 3, so thanks for exceeding my expectations! (And keep them coming ;D)

## 6. Hey There, Teenage Baltimore

A loud buzzer signaled everyone in WYZT studio that The Corny Collins Show was off the air. Smiling faces were replaced by tired frowns; the dancers kicked off their shoes and rubbed their aching backs.

Corny pushed his way through the mass of teenagers, patting a few on the shoulder with praise.

"Corny! Corny!"

The TV host froze mid-step and cringed at Amber's shrieks. His eyes started scanning the room for an escape route, but realized the search was futile when a pair of hands clamped down on his shoulders and spun him around.

"How could you let the show end?" Amber demanded, her eyes bulging as if she were a goldfish.

Corny raised his eyebrows. "Because our time slot is over."

Amber scoffed. "Well, can't you extend it or something? You promised that I could sing today!"

"First of all," Corny said, walking off the stage, "I didn't promise you anything."

"You told me I could sing my song after Inez did the Twist with Link!" Amber screeched. She followed him as he entered his dressing room, much to his annoyance.

"Amber, I told you that if there was time after the commercial break that you could perform. But we would've had to cut you off in the middle of your song," he argued, taking off his jacket and throwing it to the side.

Amber's face turned red as she crossed her arms. "Well, then, maybe you shouldn't have gone to commercial!"

"Not everything is about you, Amber!" Corny cried, wringing his hands in the air.

"No! Everything's about Li'l Inez, isn't it? Just because she's a Negro—"

"Hey!" Corny shouted, causing Amber to take a step back in surprise. "No, it's not! It has nothing to do with that!"

Amber huffed. "Right. It has nothing to do with the fact that 'diversity'," she curled her fingers into air-quotes, "is popular right now. I've seen the ratings, Corny. More people have been watching ever since Li'l Inez and Tracy Turnflab have been dancing on the show."

"Exactly!" Corny said exasperatedly. "Because they're talented!"

"Are you saying that I'm not talented?" Amber wore an expression of indignation on her face, her arms stiff at her sides.

Corny smirked and raised his eyebrows, and Amber ears spouted steam.

"How dare you even question myâ€" "

"Listen, Amber," Corny cut her off. "I would really love to sit here and chat with you. But honestly, I don't feel like going deaf today, so maybe we could take a rain check on your tirade?"

Amber screeched and a low, hoarse sound of anger erupted from her throat. But instead of retaliating, she spun on her heel and strut out of the room. As soon as she left the room, however, Noreen and Doreen marched in.

"Corny, we need to talk," one the twins said in a voice that Corny guessed was supposed to sound menacing. He sighed.

"What is it, girls?"

The both stepped forward and put their hands on their hips simultaneously, as if they had rehearsed it. "We want to lead the dance tomorrow."

"Listen, Noreen, Iâ€" "

The girl that he had been addressing held up her hand. "I'm Doreen."

"Oh, right. I'm sorry, but I already promised Inez that she couldâ€" "

Noreen huffed, interrupting Corny once again. "It's not that we don't like Inez."

Doreen shrugged. "She's a real fun girl to be around. But honestly, she's getting way too much airtime for a newbie."

"Yeah," Noreen agreed. "I mean, we had to dance all the way in the back for like, three seasons before we were able to even dance up front."

"Uh huh," Doreen nodded. "But today, she like, got to dance with Link. Like, I haven't even done that yet."

Corny sighed for what seemed like the hundredth time that day.

"Girls, I see where you're coming from. I really do. But Inez is just moreâ€"|" He paused, trying to figure the least offending way to say what he meant. Talented? Popular? Less annoying? \_

"Is it because she draws more of her crowd to the show?" Noreen whispered, and Corny furrowed his eyebrows at her in confusion.

"You know," Doreen continued, "like, more black people want to watch the show because there's one of them on it?"

Corny rolled his eyes at the girls' ignorance, but decided that the quickest way to get them to leave would be to agree with them.

"Uh, sure."

Doreen's eyes widened. "So like, does that mean that more Irish people watch the show because of us?"

Noreen blushed. "God, Doreen, you're such a moron."

The twins left the room giggling, and Corny stared after them in disbelief. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, sinking down onto his sofa. He could only deal with so many drama-queens during the day.

â€|

Sorry it took me so long to update! And I swear this story really does have a plot. You guys are so bitchin'â€|maybe I need a new word. :)

## 7. The Start of a Big Adventure

Ultra-Clutch

"And I cannot believe what Tracy Turnblad did to you!"

Tracy was sitting in history class, copying the teacher's notes off the board when she heard Tammy's high voice whispering behind her. Not daring to turn around, she slightly tilted her head towards Tammy so that she could hear what she was saying.

"Puh-lease. That sweat hog did me a favor." This time, it was Amber talking. Tracy felt her body stiffen and the grip around her pencil tightened, but she didn't want to turn around; she wouldn't give them the satisfaction of knowing they had upset her. Tracy knew that they were just trying to get a rise out of her. Their words came in loud whispers, even though they were mere inches away from each other; they were making sure Tracy heard them.

"What do you mean?" Tammy asked, softly tapping her feet against Tracy's chair.

Tracy heard Amber sigh. "I was going to dump Link anyway."

"Really?"

"Oh, definitely. I mean, between you and me, he became obsessed with the show. He would stay for hours after we were off the air trying to convince the cameraman to focus on him."

Tammy gasped. "Are you serious? What a candyass!"

"Exactly! And last week, when we were at the diner, he spent the whole



night staring at some girl," Amber spat. "He's such a pig."

"I can't believe he did that!"

"I know! I actually feel kind of sorry for Tracy," Amber said, causing Tracy to roll her eyes. She knew that none of what they were saying was true.

"Why's that?" Tammy asked. "She's the one that stole your boyfriend."

Amber cleared her throat, obviously annoyed. "She did not steal him away from me. But that's beside the point. I kind of pity her, you know? The only reason that Link's going with her is because she's popular on the show right now. The minute someone else is in the spotlight, he's gone."

Those words hit Tracy hard. Not that she believed them—or at least she thought she didn't.

'\_No\_', Tracy mentally scolded herself. '\_She's just upset. Amber's just trying to make you angry\_. \_Link wouldn't do that\_.'

As if he read her mind, Link turned around in his seat and smiled at her. But there was something in that smile that made Tracy second guess everything.

â€|

Dun, dun, dun. Okay, my bitchin' reviewers and readers, you guys are officially swell. And bitchin'. Sorry this chapter was so short (and all of you Trink lovers are probably going to kill me in my sleep). But don't worry; it gets better. :)

## 8. The Only Thing Better Than Hairspray

### Ultra Clutch

Seaweed pushed his front door open and sighed. His feet felt heavy and his eyelids started to droop, all because he was part of Corny Collin's Council. He hadn't even really wanted to be on the show; everyone had to use the same moves and it was choreographed down to each second. Dancing was supposed to be something you did to express your feelings, Seaweed thought, not something that's supposed to be planned, thought through, and executed perfectly.

He threw his keys haphazardly onto the counter and strode slowly through the living room. There were records lying on the floor, a sure sign that Inez had been borrowing his phonograph without his permission again. He thought about confronting her about it, but figured that it would be a waste of energy.

Landing with a thud onto the sofa, Seaweed closed his eyes and inhaled. But instead of smelling the familiar scent of cinnamon and baking soda, his nostrils were filled with a different smell. It practically suffocated him, and Seaweed started coughing. The noxious fumes were reminiscent of how the studio smelled after everyone on the Council had refreshed their 'do with hairspray, except it was magnified to an asphyxiating level.

"Damn," he muttered to himself, sitting up. He lifted himself off of the couch and walked down the hall to his mother's room.

"Yo, Ma!" he called, starting to open her bedroom door. "Take it easy on theâ€" "

Seaweed's voice trailed off as he looked into the room. He'd heard muffled voices several seconds before he entered the room, but now it was dead silent. The room was so dark that Seaweed could barely see the opposite wall. He furrowed his eyebrows and his eyes caught a hand shoot out from under the bed and grab something, only to be pulled back under by a separate hand.

The teen stomped his feet on the carpet, starting loud and then becoming softer with every beat. Then, he hid behind the door and peered through the crack.

"Do you think he's gone?" A smooth voice whispered, and Seaweed knew he had heard it somewhere before, but he couldn't quite place it because it was so hushed.

He heard his mother sigh and answer, "Probably off to go find Penny."

"That was close," the male voice said, and Seaweed's eyes widened in horror as he saw Corny Collins slide himself out from under his mother's bed, his hair and clothes disheveled.

"You're tellin' me honey," his mother answered, and she too rolled out from under the bed.

"We need to time these things better," Corny said, helping her off her feet.

Seaweed's jaw dropped and he shoved the door out of his way as he advanced on the couple. Corny jumped in surprise and attempted to smooth out his hair, while Maybelle stood there smiling.

"Hi, sugar. Mr. Collins and I were just going over some dance moves."

â€|

I know this was shortâ€|the chapters seem to be getting shorter and shorter. But that's high school for youâ€"no spare time. Hope you enjoyed! A little fluff to take the edge off of last chapter's slightly anti-Trinkishness. (Yes, my bitchin' reviewers and readers, I just invented a word. Heck yes.)

## 9. I'm Gonna Get Her After School

Ultra-Clutch

â€|

"What the hell is your problem?"

Amber looked up from the drinking fountain to find her ex-boyfriend

walking towards her in a menacing fashion. She looked around to see if anyone was nearby, but the hallway was empty. She knew exactly why Link was angry.

"What's the matter?" she said innocently, flashing him her best 'I-didn't-do-anything-wrong' face.

Link shook his head, almost exasperatedly so. "Cut the crap, Amber."

She was slightly taken aback by this, but didn't break from her guiltless façade. "I really don't understand what you're talking about, Link."

Link's jaw tightened, and for a moment, Amber thought he might punch her.

"Oh, so you had no idea that these," he started to unfold the crumpled picture he held in his hands, "were plastered all over the school?"

He shoved the paper into her hands as if it were a dead rat. Pretending to be unsure of what it was, she looked down at it, and almost smiled at her handiwork. It was a picture of Tracy Turnblad's face stuck onto a whale's body, and Amber thought that it almost looked real.

"Who would do such a thing?" Amber placed a hand to her chest, tossing the paper back to Link. He let the offending picture drop to the ground.

He ignored her last comment, and shook his head at her. "\_Do you know\_ what this is doing to Tracy? Do you even care?"

Amber dropped her front. "Not even remotely," she replied bitterly.

"I can't believe you," Link said. "I mean, I knew that you wereâ€|but I never thoughtâ€|"

Amber rolled her eyes at the blubbering teenager and spun on her heel. She had only gotten a few steps away before she felt Link tugging at her arm. He turned her around so she faced him.

"Don't just walk away, Amber. Why would you do something like this?"

Amber sighed. "I don't need to justify myself to you."

Link stayed silent for a moment. "Listen, I know thatâ€|I know that things between us didn'tâ€|turn out. But don't take it out on Tracyâ€|"

Amber laughed out loud. "You think I'm jealous of her? How big is your ego, exactly? Puh-lease. She can have you, for all I care."

"I didn't mean it like that, Amber. I'm just saying thatâ€|"

The blonde held up a hand. "Listen, Link, Iâ€|"

"Would you stop interrupting me?" he said, raising his voice for the first time. "God, how condescending can you get? You're treating me like I'm five years old! For God's sake, Amber! You're trying to make it seem like I'm the bad guy here!"

"I didn'tâ€"

"Just listen!" Link took a deep breath and leaned against some lockers. "I want you to apologize to Tracy."

Amber raised her eyebrows. "You want me to apologize? Did you hit your head against something, or are you just so delusional that you think I would actually do that?"

"Because it's the right thing to do."

"What are you, a Boy Scout? Besides, she deserves it."

Link shook his head. "What has she ever done to deserve this? By always treating people with kindness and respect? Oh, yeah, she's pure evil."

"Puh-lease, Link. She's not the little angel you think she is. I meanâ€|she stole everything from me! My job, my statusâ€|you," Amber didn't mean for that last word to slip out but it did. Link looked down at the ground.

"Amber," Link started. "She couldn't have stolen me away from you, because I was never yours to begin with."

Link stood up straight and walked away, shoving his hands in his pockets. The girl he left behind stared after him as he left her. He always left her.

â€|

I made Link kind of bitchy in this chapter, but oh well. What are you going to do? Besides, I think Amber needs to be yelled at a little. Or maybe it's just because I was in a bad mood when I wrote this. :)

## 10. Snap

### Ultra Clutch

A/N: This chapter is a flashback to when Link was first auditioning for the show.

â€|

Velma Von Tussle admired her rosy pink nails with pride; her manicurist really knew what she was doing.

Unlike this group of gawky fools prancing in front of her, apparently attempting to dance.

"Oh my, Amber," she sighed to her daughter, who was standing beside her. Amber had her arms folded firmly over her chest, mimicking her mother's stance. "What \_will\_ we do with them?"

Amber shrugged, and Velma gave her a disapproving glare. Von Tussles did not shrug. Or slouch for that matter, as Amber was doing know. Velma dug her nails into the young blonde's back, causing her to stand straight.

"Well, mother," Amber said, eyeing a boy in the front row. "I think he's worth a shot."

Velma followed Amber's stare. The boy was scrawny, she noticed, with legs like a bird's. His dark brown hair was pulled back, held together courtesy of Ultra Clutch. And his eyes? Swoon worthy, Velma noted. Definitely something that might draw in more viewers, even if it was in black and white.

"Who's he?" Velma whispered out of the corner of her mouth.

"Link Larkin," Amber answered, a bit too quickly. When her mother shot her a questioning look, she said, "He goes to my school. Sits next to me in history class."

Velma nodded. "Mr. Larkin?" The boy, who had been doing the Twist, turned to look at her.

"Yes, ma'am?" he asked shyly, not stopping his movements.

"How quaint," Velma muttered in annoyance. "He called me ma'am." She motioned for him to come over. Link discontinued his actions, walking briskly over to the Von Tussles.

"Yes, ma'am?" he said once again, almost choking in his nervousness.

"Calm down, silly," Amber smiled at him, placing a hand on his shoulder. He blushed, causing Velma to roll her eyes.

"Mr. Larkin," she said, leading him away from her daughter. "I see a remarkable talent in you." She hated putting on this phony sweet act; it was only until he signed the contracts, she reminded herself. She had to act as a mouse trap, luring the pests in with her compliments. And then they were trapped, the metaphorical trap snapping shut. Then she could tell him what she really felt. His footwork was sloppy, his head was slumped over while he did the Mashed Potato, and he didn't know how to do the Madison to save his life. After the contracts were signed, Velma said to herself. After the contracts were signed, she could snap the mouse trap.

"Really?" Link said meekly, blushing further. "Well, ma'am, I don't know what to say."

Oh, God, Velma thought, not this imbecile farm-boy act again. "You don't have to say anythingâ€"just that you'll take the job."

"Of course!" Link said, astounded. "Of course! Where do I sign up?"

Velma smirked. "Just go through the door, into my office. I'll meet you there with the papers."

Snap.

## 11. Really, Really, Really Swollen

Ultra Clutch

â€|

Corny looked like he was going to have a heart attack. That's the first thing Tracy noticed as she walked into the studio.

The second thing she noticed was that all of the Council Members were already lined up in their spots, eagerly awaiting rehearsal. And she supposed, they were eagerly waiting for her to show up so they could actually rehearse and get out of here, continue with their weekends like regular teenagers.

Corny looked over at her. "Nice of you to join us, Tracy." This wasn't said with malice, but with impatience. Tracy rushed over to her spot, right next to Link.

"What happened?" Link asked out of the corner of his mouth, still facing forward. Tracy thought he looked kind of ridiculous, kneeling on one knee, waiting for the cue to start dancing.

Tracy placed a hand on her hips, her own starting pose. "Ma wouldn't let me out of the house until I ate breakfast."

Link was about to reply when Corny started singing, their signal to dance. Tracy spun and ran and twisted and stepped and twirled, the different colored dresses and suits around her creating flashes in her eyes.

Corny stopped singing, and yet the music kept playing. He turned around, his back now facing the empty seats of the audience. Wincing at the group, he folded his arms across his chest. His criticisms came in a steady stream:

"Amber lift your feet more when you turn Fender stop fooling around get back on your spot where's my microphone you need to smile more Tammy this is the \_Corny Collins Show\_ not a depression clinic has anyone seen my microphone could someone answer that phone what about you Link can you answer that phone you're right next to it fine I'll answer it myself God damnit Amber lift your God damn feet!"

When the music stopped, everyone stopped dancing and looked down at the ground, feeling too ashamed to look at anything else. Corny had found something wrong with everyone's performance. Tracy knew he wasn't normally like this; maybe he was just spreading himself too thin. He was the host of a popular television show, and already stressful job. But now he had to be the station manager (thanks to the fact that Mr. Spritzer is so cheap he didn't want to hire a new employee) and he had to choreograph all of their routines on top of that.

"Okay," Corny said, massaging his aching head. "Let's try that again." This demand was met by a chorus of exhausted groans.

Amber huffed. "\_Cor\_-ny! We've been practicing this dance \_all\_ week! We're tired! Can't we have a break?"

For once, Tracy agreed with Amber.

"Yeah," Doreen nodded. "My ankles, are like, swollen. \_Really, really, really swollen\_. Like, I couldn't even put my shoes on this morning, \_ they were so swollen\_."

"\_So swollen\_," Noreen added for emphasis, as if Corny hadn't heard her twin the first three times. "She had to borrow a pair of mine, because my feet are bigger. I'm not really sure why, though. I mean, you'd think because we're identical and all, we'd have the same shoe size, but actually, my feet are like, two sizes bigger than hers. Her feet were \_so swollen\_â€"

"Okay!" Corny yelled, causing Tracy to raise her eyebrows. Corny rarely yelled at anyone, and if he did raise his voice, it was to congratulate, not criticize. "Okay, I get it, Doreen."

"Noreen," she corrected, narrowing her eyes.

"Noreen," Corny sighed exasperatedly. He sunk back into a foldable chair, the metal legs clanking against the floor as the force of his body pushed it back. "One more time." More groans. "Take it from the top."

â€|

## 12. It's Christmas, Shut Up

"Seaweed!"

The teenager scowled, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. Sunlight poured in through his bedroom window, and he let out a heavy sigh. It was Christmasâ€"not that he didn't like Christmas (after all, he usually got a new record), but he didn't see the point anymore. He remembered when he was younger; he was up at the crack of dawn, waiting expectantly by the Christmas tree, waiting for his mom to wake up. One thing he had learned in his lifetimeâ€"you \_never\_ wake up Maybelle Stubbs. You just don't. Unless you want to get a whoopin'.

Christmas was his father's favorite holiday; he would hang up the lights and holly, and sometimes when he was feeling frisky, he would hang up some mistletoe over Maybelle's head (although he would have to stand on his tiptoes, on account of Maybelle being taller) and they would kiss and Seaweed would stick his tongue out in disgust. Yes, Seaweed's father loved Christmas. That's why Seaweed didn't.

"Seaweed!" Inez called again, banging on his door. "Get your lazy butt up! Mama won't let us open presents until you come out and listen to her read the Bible!"

Seaweed groaned, kicking his blanket off and slowly rising from his bed. He stretched his arms out, letting a loud yawn escape.

"Hurry up!" Inez squealed.

"Hold on, Inez!" Seaweed groaned. "I'll be out in a minute!"

He could hear Inez give an annoyed grunt and walk away, no doubt with tight fists and an angry glare. Seaweed walked over to his dresser, grabbing a random shirt from the pile. He pulled it on, trying to decide whether or not he should put on one of those Christmas sweaters his Aunt Delilah got him. He didn't really feel like wearing any article of clothing that had a reindeer or Santa's face plastered across the front—it just wasn't \_cool\_. So he left the room sans sweater, giving silent thanks for the fact that his aunt wasn't here now—he wouldn't have to worry about her being offended.

"Finally," Inez grumbled, folding her arms as Seaweed entered the living room. She was sitting on the couch, legs folded underneath her.

Maybelle's hair was in curlers and there were bags under her eyes. She sat at her armchair, the one with the coffee stains, with the family Bible lying across her lap. It was already open to the page they read every Christmas. Seaweed didn't see why they had to read it every year; he could probably recite it by now, he'd heard it so many times.

"Morning Seaweed," Maybelle said, giving him one of her syrupy-sweet smiles.

"Yeah, morning Seaweed," Inez spat, arguably less sweetly than her mother. "Nice of you to finally join us."

"Inez," Maybelle said warningly.

"Shut up," Seaweed told his sister, ignoring his mother.

"Don't you be tellin' me to shut up," Inez stuck her tongue out at him. "I ain't the one actin' like a princess, makin' everyone wait until I'm ready to start the day!"

"You know what, Inez?"

"Seaweed!" Maybelle yelled, clutching the Bible firmly in her hands. "Sit down and be quiet! It's Christmas for God's sake! Could you two get along for five minutes?"

Seaweed scowled, plopping down on the opposite end of the couch. "Fine. If Inez promises to stop being a little brat."

Inez gasped, as if scandalized. "Oh, I know you did \_not\_ just say that, Seaweed."

"Well, I did, and I ain't sorry for it, either!" Seaweed said, not looking at his sister. Maybelle furrowed her eyebrows, but looked down at the book and started reading.

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby," she began. Inez started kicking the edge of the couch, causing it to shake. "—keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of—"

"Stop kicking the couch, Inez!" Seaweed yelled. "You're gonna scratch the floor!"



Inez rolled her eyes. "You already scratched the floor last week when you and Penny moved the couch toâ€!"

"\_Shut up, Inez\_!"

"Stop using saying that! It's Christmas! Can't you just get along?" Maybelle shouted. "I cannot believe you two!"

Seaweed sighed, sinking back down into his seat. Inez looked at the ground, ashamed.

"Now," Maybelle said, settling back into her quiet, tranquil mood. "Would you shut the hell up so I can read about the miracle of Jesus Christ's birth?"

### 13. The Return of Velma

It was a dress rehearsal at the WYZT studio for the \_Corny Collins Show\_, and everyone was exhausted. They had done all the twirling, twisting, prancing, dancing, jumping, spinning that they could handle. If that wasn't enough, they had to do all of this in their costumes for the Christmas Pageant, which was taking place the next day. Sweat clung to their bodies and a sickening odor of hairspray and perspiration hung in the air, making their eyes water.

"Break," Noreen grumbled, falling to her knees with dramatic effort. "We needâ€|a break." She clutched her neck, making choking noises. The bells around her collar jingled. "Waterâ€|soâ€|thirsty."

Corny rolled his eyes, as did everyone else. They were tired, but \_come on\_.

"Fine," the host finally gave in. Everyone gave a sigh of relief and made their way off the stage.

"But only five minutes," Corny added, much to the disappointment of his crew. "I don't think all of you have the dance down yet."

Amber crossed her arms in annoyance. "Why don't you just make \_them\_ practice it, then?"

"Considering you're one of the people that still need practice, Amber," Corny said. "I don't think you're in any position to complain. And all of you should be working on this togetherâ€"that's how it's going to be in the Christmas Pageant, isn't it? All of you dancing together. It doesn't make sense for just \_some\_ people to be practicing."

"Fine," Amber spat, pulling on a loose thread on her elf costume. "I \_understand\_, Corny."

"Hey, Corny?" Tracy asked, walking over to his spot on the elevated stage. Seaweed was following closely behind. "Can we talk to you about something?"

"Of course," Corny said.

"Wellâ€|" Tracy started. "Do I have to wear this costume?"

"What's the matter with it?"

"I can't exactly dance in it," Tracy said, shaking her head. "I mean, I can, technically, but it's awfully uncomfortable. And I look kind of ridiculous"

"Aw, Tracy," Corny said, resting a hand on her shoulder. "You look swell!"

"Corny," Tracy said, a look of exasperation on her face. "I'm a Christmas Tree. My costume is a dress with leaves, pinecones, and ornaments glued onto it. And a star hat on my head! A star hat!"

Corny cringed. "Well, I can see where you're coming from, really. But it's not \_that\_ bad."

"See these lights?" Seaweed asked, motioning to the wiring that was wrapped around Tracy's dress.

Corny nodded

"They work," Seaweed mumbled, flicking a switch on the back of the dress. Sure enough, flashes of red and orange and green erupted from the little glass bulbs.

Corny raised his eyebrows, and Seaweed nodded his head. "I rest my case."

"Oh," Corny said. "Well that's even a little too tacky for \_my\_ taste. But, Tracy, you did volunteer to be the tree. You can't just drop out of your promises because you don't like them. I mean, look at me! I have to be Santa Claus! This beard is the itchiest son of a"

"I guess you're right," Tracy interrupted. "I should stick to my promises. I'll be the Christmas Tree."

"That's my girl!" Corny said, patting her on the back. He was just turning to leave when Seaweed called for him to stay.

"Corny," he said. "I'm having an issue with these tights." Seaweed tugged at the green-and-red-striped stockings that were wrapped around his legs. "They're...chafing. In certain areas."

Tracy nodded in agreement. "Link went into the bathroom to take his off; he said he can't even move."

"Were these made for chicks, or something?" Seaweed asked, once again prodding at his costume.

"Oh," Corny grimaced. "Sorry. The costume department went out and bought twenty elf costumes for the Council I don't think they took measurements or anything. You might want to talk to them about that."

Seaweed nodded grimly, and he waddled off with Tracy to go find where the costume department was. Corny rested his head against the podium in front of him, drained from having to deal with teenager drama. He was finally alone in the studio; Seaweed and Tracy were the last to

leave. Now, at last, he could relax; at least for five minutesâ€|

"Corny!" Amber shrieked, and Corny groaned. The blonde marched up to his pedestal, arms placed firmly on her hips.

"We need to talk camera time," she told him. Corny rolled his eyes.

"No, we really don't, Amber," Corny said. "I've already talked it over with the cameraman. You know, the one person that actually has to know where the camera's going."

Amber scoffed. "I have to know, too! I mean, if I'm going to be seen in this hideous," she clutched at her dress, "disaster, I might as well know when the camera's supposed to be on me. That way, maybe, just maybe, I can make this seamstress mistake work."

"Don't be like that, Amber," Corny said, running a hand through his stiff hair.

"Give it up, Corny," Amber spat. "You have no idea what you're doing. I don't know why Mr. Spritzer doesn't just fire you already."

"You know what, Amber?" Corny said, raising his voice. He was about to scold her when the door behind them opened. The host spun around to see who it was; when he did, he wished he hadn't. Amber, on the other hand, was euphoric.

"I wouldn't finish that thought if I were you. That is, if you want to keep your job."

He closed his eyes. "Velma."

#### 14. Double the Pleasure, Double the Fun

##### Ultra Clutch

Hey guys! Okay, this chapter is a little differentâ€|it takes place a few weeks before Velma comes back. I'll be dealing with her in the next chapter :)

â€|

It was funny, Noreen thought to herself, how different things were once the cameras were off. No more fake smiles, friendly waves. No sir. Especially where Amber Von Tussle was concerned.

"Okay," the blonde screeched out. "Which one of you took my Ultra Clutch?"

She saw Brad let out an innocent whistle, and she grinned in spite of herself. Brad was always pulling stuff like this. The dancer leaned against his makeup table, polishing his nails on his jacket and avoiding eye contact with Amber.

"Brad," Amber hissed. "I swear, if you even put your grubby little hands on my stuffâ€|!"

"Relax, doll," Brad schmoozed. "I just borrowed it for a little touch-up." He gave her a trademark 'Link Wink', picked up the can, and tossed it over to her. She awkwardly caught it between her wrists, glaring at him.

Doreen walked over to her sister, shaking her head. "Ugh, what a loser."

"Yeah, I know," Noreen agreed. "Amber is such an airhead."

"Not Amber, Brad," Doreen sighed. "Oh, God, he's coming over here now."

"Hey, ladies," Brad said smoothly, sliding towards them. "May I just say that you two are looking gorgeous today?"

Noreen giggled. "Thanks, Brâ€œ"

"No, you may not," Doreen huffed. "What do you want?"

"Hey, simmer down, D," Brad said, holding up his hands. "I'm just sayin' hello."

"Yeah?" Doreen said, raising her eyebrows.

"Well," Brad replied. "I do have an ulterior motive, you know."

"Really," Doreen said dryly.

"I was wondering if you two fine ladies would do me the honors of accompanying me to the drive-in on Friday?" Brad said, straightening his collar.

Noreen blushed. "I'd loâ€œ"

"Absolutely not," Doreen snapped.

Brad's shoulders drooped. "Aw, come on. Double the pleasure, double the fun, right?"

Doreen's eyes widened. "How dare you?!" She raised her hand and slapped him across the face.

"Ah!" Brad cried, holding a hand to the spot. "What'd you go and do a thing like that for?"

"You are one of the most disgusting pigs I've ever met in my entire life!" Doreen shouted, causing all the Council members to watch. "And you would do the world a huge favor if you just stopped breathing andâ€œ!"

"Okay, okay," Brad said quietly. "I get it, jeez."

Doreen huffed and marched away, leaving Noreen alone with Brad. Everyone turned back to their business, whether it be applying Hairspray or wiping off makeup.

"Sorry," Noreen apologized. "She can be a littleâ€œ"

"Aw, it's alright," Brad said, rubbing his cheek one last time. "She sure can hurt a guy, though."

"You know, Brad," Noreen said. "You were being kind of a jerk."

"I know," Brad said sheepishly. "I just thought that's how all the guys impressed chicks. You know, acting all tough and stuff. I guess, instead of impressing you, Iâ€¦"

"You were trying to impress me?"

"Yeah," Brad blushed. "I meanâ€¦I don't really like your sister that way, honest. She's nice, sure, but you'reâ€¦you know."

"Well, I think you'reâ€¦you know, too."

"I guess it was a stupid idea," Brad said. "I'm full of stupid ideas. Just ask my dad."

Noreen laughed. "You know, I'dâ€¦I'd still like to go to the movies with you. You knowâ€¦if you're stillâ€¦still asking."

"Yeah," Brad smiled. "Yeah, I'd like that a lot."

â€¦

Thanks! Reviews make me happy.

## 15. Brass Knuckles

Link sighed against the wind, gripping his shoulders and bracing himself against the bitter twisting air. His sweater was too thin, barely supplying him with the comfort he was seeking. Seaweed's house was only a few blocks away; his eyes watered as another unsympathetic gust hit him in the face.

He hated walking through this part of town; everyone shot him dirty looks, looks that said, "Why the hell are you here?" and "Get out, white boy." Link refused to look anyone in the eyes, afraid of what would happen if he held eye contact with the wrong person for too long. It had happened once before; luckily, he'd been with Seaweed, who had bailed him out with his quick thinking.

Turning the corner, his sneakers beat against the pavement. The only sound was the howling of the wind. That is, untilâ€¦

"Get up, punk!"

Link instinctively ran towards the sound; he'd heard someone get slammed against the wall of a nearby building. He needed to make sure the person was alright; judging by the taunts being shouted at whoever it was, they were far from alright. His feet pounding against the ground, he finally reached the scene; to his horror, he saw that Seaweed was sprawled out across the ground, an older boy standing over at him.

"Hey!" Link shouted, sprinting to Seaweed's side. His friend smiled weakly up at him, shaking his head. There was a gash above his left

eyebrow; blood trickled down his face, staining his white shirt. He was wheezing heavily; Link guessed that he'd gotten the wind knocked out of him.

"You okay?" Link asked, kneeling down. He felt a pair of powerful hands clamp down on his shoulders, picking him up by the shirt. It was the other boy, who had been forgotten about in concern for Seaweed.

"What the hell you think you doin' here?" The boy's hands were still gripping his shoulders. Link shoved him off, taking a few steps back.

"I'm here to help my friend," Link spat, not sounding as intimidating as he wanted to.

The other boy laughed, stepping towards him. "Why don't you just go back to the sock hop like all your little white friends?"

"Who do you think you are?" Link said nervously, backing away again.

"Me?" The boy asked, pointing to himself. "The name's Bones. I'm insulted you didn't know that before. I sure know who you are."

"Yeah?" Link said, crossing his arms. He could feel his knees shaking in fear, but tried to cover it up by acting tough. "You think you know me?"

"I know you're a spoiled ass white kid who thinks he's a badass," Bones snarled, his upper lip curling up. "Kid, you ain't never messed with Bones before."

"Y-you're right," Link choked. "Butâ€|you never messed withâ€|with Link Larkinâ€|before."

"I'm shakin'," Bones said, narrowing his eyes and laughing. "Please, h-h-h-have mercy on me!"

Seaweed had propped himself up on his elbows now, his head resting against the wall. "Bones. Leave him alone. This is between me and you."

Bones shook his head. "And deny Mr. Larkin the fight he so greatly desires? I wouldn't dream of it."

Link gulped nervously, wincing at Bones. Man, was Bones a lot taller all of a sudden. And bigger, much bigger. Link widened his eyes as the older teen cracked his knuckles, moving menacingly towards him.

"Youâ€|you think you're so bad?" Link said, hoping that maybe he could talk himself out of this predicament. "Picking on someoneâ€|"

"Oh," Bones interrupted, grabbing Link's shoulder roughly. "I don't think I'm bad." He sunk his fist into Link's stomach, smirking as his victim dropped onto his knees in pain. "I know I'm bad."

Link clutched his stomach, bending at his waist and moaning in agony. Bones sure knew how to throw a punch.

"Link!" Seaweed called, his voice filled with worry. "Are you okay, man?"

"Yeah," Link choked out. He glared up at Bones, who was staring down at him in amusement. Lifting his fist, he punched Bones in the leg—a feeble push compared to Bones' strength.

Bones scowled down at him. "Bitch, what the hell you think you're doing?" He swung his hand back, bringing his knuckles down on Link's eye.

â€|

"Oh my gosh!" Tracy exclaimed, placing a steak on Link's face. "I can't believe you got into a fight!"

"It wasn't really a fight," Link said sheepishly. "More like a beating." He winced as she applied pressure.

"Sorry," she whispered, shaking her head. "I know you were just trying to help Seaweed out, butâ€|"

"Tracy!" Edna yelled as she walked into the room. She ripped the steak from Tracy's hands. "We're having that for dinner tonight." She grabbed some ice from the fridge and put it in a bag, handing it over to Tracy. "There, use that instead."

Edna peered at Link's injury through the plastic. "Was the guy wearing brass knuckles?"

â€|

## 16. Head Injury

The school nurse, Nancy, raised her eyebrows at the young black man as he entered her office. He looked incredibly upset, and she could understand why; a white girl of similar age was grasping him by the sleeve of his sweater, face red and eyes murderous.

"Umâ€|can I help you?" Nancy asked, folding her arms across her chest. The boy stayed quiet, but he didn't need to speak as the girl answered for him.

"This is Seaweed J. Stubbs," she snapped. "I'm Penny Pingleton."

"Nancy," the nurse replied. "What's wrong?"

"My boyfriend refuses to seek medical attention," Penny huffed.

Seaweed shook his head, prying her hands off his shirt. "Penny, I told you, I'm fine. It was just a small fight, nothing serious."

"Nothing serious?!" Penny shrieked. "Are you kidding me? You have

head injuries, Seaweed!"

"How many times do I have to tell you that it's not a big deal?"

"Yes it is!"

"No, it's not," Seaweed said. "Jesus, you overreact too much. I mean, most people would just be like, 'Oh, Seaweed, I'm sorry you got into a fight.' And that would be the end of the issue. But not you! No, you had to check out a whole medical encyclopedia from the library!"

Penny put her hands on her hips. "Oh, don't get started with me."

"You made me read the whole thing on head injuries, Penny! And I didn't have any of those God damn symptoms!"

"Don't raise your voice at me, Stubbs!"

"I'll do whatever I want to, Pingleton!" Seaweed replied. "I'm not dizzy, I don't see little black and white circles in my eyes, and I don't feel confused or lightheaded!"

"Um...Mr. Stubbs?" Nancy asked wearily. "If you think you have a head injury, I'm obligated to examine you."

"That's the point!" Seaweed yelled, and Nancy furrowed her eyebrows. "I don't think I have a God damn head injury!"

"Yes, you do!" Penny squealed. "You have a head injury, and Nancy here will diagnose it!"

"The only head injury I have is you!" Seaweed said through gritted teeth. Penny looked taken aback. He must've noticed the hurt in her eyes, as he instantly softened. "Oh, Penny, I'm sorry, I didn't mean!"

"It's okay, Seaweed."

"No, really, I'm sorry. You're right, I probably do have a head injury, 'cuz all the stuff I'm sayin' is all wrong."

"Seaweed, it's fine."

Seaweed shook his head, sitting down on the patient chair. "No, it's not. Penny, I'll get my head checked, I promise."

"No, it's okay. You're probably fine. I just...you know, I get worried sometimes."

"I know, Penny," Seaweed said, grabbing her hand and standing up. "Let's go find Link and Tracy."

And so they exited the office, leaving a very confused nurse behind.

â€|



Yeahâ€|that was probably monumentally stupid, but it's an idea I've had for awhile.

## 17. Vices

Prudy had her vices, of course. Everyone had vices, it was only natural. Man was man, so on and so forth, right? Most everybody assumed that because she was a good Christian woman, she didn't indulge or have any secret frivolous wishes. Oh, how everyone was so, so wrong. After all, she was only human.

Every time she picked up the needle, she felt blissful, almost crazed and eager to reach that high again. She kept it in a pretty little case, which was stored in her pocket at all times. When she slept, the case stayed by her bed; it never left her side. Prudy always worried someone would steal it; even though she could always buy another needle, this one was special to her. It was the one she always used, the one she used the first time. It had sentimental value, honestly.

She walked down the street, coat clutched tightly to her. Prudy could feel the thugs looking up and down her body, and she felt overexposed. She wished that she could get it at a better part of town, but the only guy that sold the best stuff was located in the middle of Hoodlum City. Her feet tapped quickly against the ground, excited to finally reach her destination. The pitter-patter of her heart grew louder; she recognized this feeling. She was, after all, an addict ready to feed.

Slowly opening the door, she noticed the lights were dimmer than usual. Prudy felt for the money in her pocket, and smiled to herself as she felt the familiar wad of cash. She had brought a little extra, because the stuff was getting more expensive every day, it seemed.

"Hey," he muttered. Prudy scowled at the look he gave her. It was that 'look' again; that all knowing look that said, 'Lady, you got problems. You've been here every day for the past five years.'

"Hello," she said sharply. This was purely business. "You got the stuff?"

"You got the money?" he responded. "'Cuz lady, you know, I ain't givin' this to you for free. I'm not that charitable."

She slammed the bills down on the counter. "Let me see it."

He rolled his eyes, and pulled a box out from behind the counter, finally placing on the table in front of him.

"Is thatâ€|is that what I think this is?" Prudy gasped. "I thought they didn't make that stuff anymore."

"'Course they do. How else could I make my money?"

â€|

Prudy smiled to herself, clutching her purchases. She reached for her

needle; it glinted in the dim light from the lamp.

This sweater was going to be so divine.

## 18. Pink

Brad liked the color pink. He knew it was sissy, and that if anyone found out, he'd probably be called a candyass for the rest of his life. But it was the truth; he liked the color pink.

In fact, he loved it. His room was painted pink (one of the reasons his friends weren't allowed to come over to his house), his bed sheets were pink, even his underwear was pink. He wasn't really sure why he was obsessed with the color: his older sister said that it had to do with him being born while Venus was in line with the Sun, or something like that. Brad thought all that astrology stuff was bogus, anyways. The only thing he knew was that no one would ever find out about it. His fixation, that is.

He lay sprawled out across his bed, trying to finish up the history essay Mr. Callahan had assigned nearly a month ago. The thing with being on the Council was that teachers tended to be pretty lenient towards schoolwork. It was almost worth having to be stuck in a studio with Amber Von Tussle for hours. The only bad thing was that it was his birthday today, and he'd much rather be out with Noreen than writing some paper on how Shakespeare influenced the English language.

Noreen was great; he didn't really know anyway else to describe her. He wasn't like Link; he didn't have a way with words. She was everything he wanted in a girlfriend; she was funny, she laughed at his jokes, and she was definitely a knock out. The only thing that bothered him was that she sometimes seemed uncomfortable around him. One second they'd be laughing or talking, having a great time. The next, she'd be making up some excuse about how she had to go home. Yesterday, on their date, she'd told him that her grandmother was sick and she needed to take care of her.

Brad knew for a fact that both of her grandmothers were dead. But he hadn't said anything about it. He nodded and drove her home. Brad had even told her that he wished her grandma got better soon. He was afraid of what would happen if he asked her why she constantly made excuses to get away from him. Did he come on too strong? Sure, he made some jokes about sex and stuff, but he didn't want to push her into anything.

Maybe it was because she knew his favorite color was pink.

## 19. For Like, a Gazillion Months

**\*\*A/N\*\***: In the last chapter, I was in no way saying that guys couldn't like pink, or that they were sissies. It's totally fine if they like pink. Pink is a pretty kick-ass color. I was playing off Brad's insecurities, and not wanting to deal with the feeling of rejection. That's all. :)

Oh, and to youcantstop.beat: This story doesn't really have a plot. It's more like a collection of vignettes. Some of them are related,

while others are completely unconnected. Earlier on, I was vaguely following a plot line, but now I've strayed from that. Which is good, because it was probably going to only be five chapters long.

And so concludes my longest author's note EVER.

â€|

Doreen was stupid. Dense, thick, slow. She knew it, too. So she wasn't as pathetic as, say, Tammy, who thought she was the next Thomas Edison.

But if there was one thing she knew, it was that she knew when she was being duped.

"Corny," she squeaked, folding her arms across her chest. "You said I could dance with Link."

The attractive television host massaged his throbbing temples and groaned. "Doreen. Link has a partnerâ€"Tracy, remember? And you're assigned to dance withâ€"

"Sketch, I know," Noreen finished, her shoulders slumped over. "Butâ€|I really, really, really want to dance with Link. I mean, he's the one that all those talent scouts look at, isn't he?"

"Wellâ€"

"And," Doreen continued, her voice growing louder. "I think I deserve to be noticed for once. I mean, I've been dancing in the back for years now, Corny. Inez and Tracy get to dance in the front! And they just came onto the show, like, a couple of weeks ago."

"It's been six months."

"So?!" Doreen exclaimed, her cheeks turning a bright shade of red. "I've been on this show for a gazillion months, and do you see me prancing around downstage? No, you don't. You know why? Because you won't let me dance with Link."

Corny opened his mouth to speak, but the young brunette once again cut him off. "I mean, don't get me wrong. I love Tracy and Inez. I totally invited them to my sleepover last month. But that doesn't change the fact that I'm being treated unfairly. What am I, just a background dancer to you?"

"I don't choreograph the dances, Doreen," Corny interrupted her tirade. "Our lovely Velma Von Tussle assigns the parts. Butâ€"

Doreen raised her hand, signaling for him to stop talking. Her lips were pressed together in frustration, and she shook her head. "Don't give me that again, Mr. Collins. If it was truly up to Amber's mom, I wouldn't even be on this show."

Corny raised his eyebrows, silently agreeing. It was true. Velma couldn't stand the twins, but Corny refused to let them go. They added an element of quirkiness, which was something he felt his show needed. This was, of course, a teen dance show. You can't take

yourself too seriously in this business. "Right.  
Noreen" "

"Doreen!" she corrected, and Corny sighed.

"Doreen, right. I think" "

"Please, Corny!" Doreen sank to her knees, and was clinging onto his leg.

"Doreen!" Corny pried her fingers off his pantsuit, and realized quite painfully that she had her fingernails dug into his skin. Rubbing the sting away, Corny continued: "Would you just let me talk, please? I'd be happy to let you dance with Link. Provided it's alright with him, and Tracy."

"Really?" Doreen jumped to her feet, clapping her hands excitedly. "Are you truly serious?"

"Of course," Corny muttered, voice squeaky from the pain.

"Sorry," Doreen mumbled sheepishly, looking down at the ground.

"Would you trim your nails?" Corny narrowed his eyes at the teen. "I think I'm bleeding."

## 20. Catty

This chapter takes place right after Velma comes back to the studio, by the way.

"

"Surprised to see me?" Velma clicked her tongue, smirking. Corny remained silent, his mouth gaping open like a dead fish.

"Well," she continued. "I have to say, Corny, \_I'm\_ surprised to see \_you\_ still working here."

Corny finally regained his ability to speak. "I"why are you here, Velma?"

Velma rolled her eyes, dropping her purse down on Corny' chair. "Amber, why don't you run along and play with your little friends?"

"I don't have any friends."

"Just go," Velma hissed. Amber huffed, but went out the door anyways.

"Mr. Spritzer called; my employment is no longer terminated," Velma said.

When the host didn't say anything, she added, "That means I got my job back."

"I know what it means," Corny spat. "I just don't know \_how\_."

"I think it's obvious," Velma said. "You weren't doing a good job, I'm able to do a good job, they needed someone that could do a good jobâ€|really, Corny, do I need to spell it out for you?"

"I'm doing a better job than you could ever do," Corny said through gritted teeth. "These kids actually enjoy coming to work every dayâ€|"

"Work isn't meant to be enjoyed, Corny," Velma interrupted. "I'm shocked that this show hasn't even been canceled yet, with all the dances you choreograph. I literally fell asleep during the Jerky Turkey last week."

Corny clenched his fists. "You can't justâ€|get rehired! I mean, you broke the rules!"

"'You broke the rules,'" Velma mimicked, waving her hands in the air. "What are you, an Eagle Scout? Since when is being a golden child valued in the entertainment business, Corny?"

"Some people think good morals are important, Velma."

"Well," Velma said, putting her hands on her hips and circling Corny as if he were prey. "Not in Baltimore."

"Who'd you have to sleep with this time?" Corny snapped.

"Oh, Corny," Velma said. "So catty."

"I'm serious," Corny replied nastily. "Because that's the only way you would've gotten your job back. And, let's be frank here, it's not exactly \_below\_ you."

Velma's eyes narrowed. "Just what gives you the right to talk to me that way, youâ€|"

The studio door swung open; Mr. Spritzer walked briskly into the room, his face bright red.

"I'm so glad we'll be working together again," Velma finished, a fake smile plastered onto her face.

## 21. Cracker Boy

"I'm just saying. Do I look like a cracker to you?" Link asked Seaweed, shaking his head. "Am I a Nabisco snack, or something?"

Seaweed rolled his eyes and leaned against the bleachers, sighing. "Not this again."

"Yes, this again," Link exclaimed, crossing his arms across his chest. When he'd shown up to the WYZZ studio a couple of minutes ago, Seaweed had greeted with him a hearty: 'Hey, cracker boy!' Link could not, for the life of him, figure out why the hell he was being called a cracker.

Seaweed looked at his friend in annoyance. "Man, it's just a

phrase."

"Well, it's rubbing me the wrong way," Link said, his cheeks turning red. He kept shifting his weight from foot to foot. He felt foolish for saying this to Seaweed; he knew his friend meant no offense when he called him 'Cracker Boy', but it got on his nerves. Some of the other black guys called him Cracker as an insult, not a friendly greeting.

"Would you calm down?" Seaweed furrowed his eyebrows. "What, you got ants in your pants, or something?" Seaweed's eyes widened and he lowered his voice: "You ain't got crabs, or nothin', do you?"

"No!" Link yelled, causing some of the Council members to look over at them. "I don't have crabs, what the hell?"

"Sorry," Seaweed mumbled.

Link shrugged, and shook his head. "It's okay. It's justâ€¦well, why do you call me a Cracker? I mean, what's with the whole 'Cracker' thing?"

Seaweed opened his mouth to speak, and then closed it again. "You knowâ€¦I don't know. It's just what I call you."

"Yeah, well, other people are calling me Cracker, and not in a friendly way, man," Link said, shaking his head again.

"You know," IQ said, walking up to the two. Seaweed gave the boy a look of confusion.

"How long have you been there?" Seaweed asked the nerdy teen, who shrugged.

"Long enough," IQ answered. "Since you were asking, Link: the phrase 'Cracker' comes from the South. It's kind of like a label for white guys. There are a few different theories about its originâ€¦"

"What the hell?" Seaweed interrupted. "How do you know all this stuff?"

"One theory," IQ continued. "One theory is that 'cracking corn', which is a process used to make moonshine that is used in the South, may have prompted the description of white males as 'crackers', because they 'cracked' corn. Another is that Shakespeare referred to haughty and superior, and otherwise bigoted men as 'crackers'."

Seaweed and Link raised their eyebrows simultaneously.

"Anyways," IQ said. "Let's go stretch. Show's starting soon."

â€¦

Hope you guys enjoyed! (I asked my History teacher what 'cracker' meant, and he went into this huge tangent about it. So, that's where I got my information :)

## 22. Fun Loving, Free Wheelin'

She tucked a strand of her hair behind her ear, wondering if anyone would notice if she got up and left. Just packed her bags and ran away, never looking back. They probably wouldn't. Nobody cared. Brenda was willing to bet that no one even knew she was alive anymore. But, then again, she knew that wasn't true.

Brenda missed school; it was a strange thing to miss, seeing as how she had absolutely hated it when she'd been forced to attend. But now that she'd dropped out, she longed to go back. She missed Shelley and Link and Brad, even Amber for God's sake. She'd give anything to be back on the show, anything. If she could just go back in time and stop this whole thing from happening, she would do it in a heartbeat. Brenda was tired of all the looks she got from people at the grocery store. She wasn't about to go try talk to her old friends. She didn't need all the staring, all the awkwardness...she got enough of that from strangers.

She didn't miss Fender, but only because he was always around. She didn't know why he even bothered; most guys his age would never even give a pregnant girl a second look. And yet, there Fender was, always coming over to her house after school. Sometimes he'd even bring over her homework, and she'd tell him she didn't go to school anymore, so he shouldn't bother.

As she lay down on the couch, she tried to avoid her mother's hurtful gaze. Not surprisingly, her family was anything but pleased about her pregnancy. They didn't want anyone thinking that their perfect family was anything but. They'd been telling people that Brenda was ill, and that it caused her gain weight around her midsection. Of course, no one believed them. Brenda wouldn't have.

"Brenda," her mother whispered, twirling the pearls on her necklace nervously. "I was...I was thinking. Perhaps it would be a good idea if you stayed at your aunt's for awhile."

Brenda sat up slowly. Everything she did these days was slowly. "What?"

"You always liked spending time in New York," she continued. "And I don't think it would be appropriate if you...if you stayed here."

The teenager closed her eyes and shook her head. "No."

"Excuse me?" Her mother crossed her arms across her chest, raising her eyebrows. "I was not under the impression that I was asking you, Brenda."

"You can't just ship me off just because something bad happened!" Brenda yelled, standing from the couch, although it took longer than usual. "You think that you can just fix everything, just get rid of everything that isn't perfect!"

"Hold your tongue!"

"No!" Brenda was practically shaking now, and her face was bright red. "I'm pregnant, Mom! You can't change that! Sending me off ot New York, sending me anywhere, will not change that!"

The older woman in front of her clenched her jaw. "Get out."

"What?"

"You heard me," she opened the front door, pointing outside. "Get out. Get out, and come back when you can have respect for your own mother."

Brenda huffed. "Fine."

\* \* \*

>She wobbled along the street, biting the inside of her cheek. Her arms were crossed firmly across her body, and she was blinking back tears. Brenda felt angry at herself for ever letting something like this happen. It hadn't really been her fault; he'd taken advantage of her. But it was her fault, in a way. If she hadn't come to him, then none of this would've ever happened. She wouldn't be carrying his baby around in her body, she wouldn't be out of school, she wouldn't be without friends, she wouldn't be so God damn depressed all the time.<p><p>

"Brenda," a soft voice sounded behind her, and she whipped her head around. It was Fender, his backpack at his side.

"Hello, Fender," she breathed, shaking her head. "Would it be okay...I don't really feel like talking right now."

He nodded his head but kept walking alongside her, and slung his backpack on. "I can talk to you, though, right?"

"Huh?"

Fender grinned, looking down at the ground. "I mean, can I talk to you? You don't have to say anything back."

Brenda inwardly rolled her eyes, but nodded anyways.

"I had a pretty boring day today," he started, shoving his fingers into his pockets. "My dad had this really massive hangover, you know? So I had to walk to school, on account of the fact he didn't want to drive me and I'd missed the bus. And then it was real awkward during math 'cuz Link and Tracy were passing notes to each other, and Amber opened one-Oh, did you hear? Amber and Link broke up. He's going with Tracy now."

"I think everyone in Baltimore knows that," Brenda said, remembering the pageant. "At least, everyone that has a TV."

He laughed. "So, anyways, my day was pretty much uneventful. What about you?"

"Same here," she lied.

"I'm sorry," Fender said. "Hey, you know, it's always fun talking to you, though. You're making my day a lot better."

Brenda gave him a weak smile. "Thanks. You too."



They walked along in silence, with Brenda absentmindedly rubbing her stomach and Fender staring down at the ground, jumping over any cracks. She wondered how it was possible that someone so childlike could be so mature.

### 23. Intelligence Quotient

"I.Q.!"

Her voice has this whiny quality to it that he can't stand, and he winces as she screams his name. Grabbing his ever-present can of Ultra-Clutch off of his dressing table, he flips it back and forth between his hands. That way, he figures, his hands will be distracted and won't have the urge to wrap themselves around her neck. She strides over to him, joining arms with him and giving him a kiss on the cheek. He wonders if she's with him because she likes him, or if she just needed someone so she wouldn't be lonely.

"Baby, you told me you'd pick me up this morning," she whispers haughtily in his ear, obviously miffed. She smoothes down the front of her dress with her free hand, giving a little whimper. "I had to carpool with Brad and Fender. \_Brad and Fender\_." She shudders. "And I had to sit in the backseat with Brenda! \_It\_ nearly threw up on me! Can you believe that?!"

"No," he mutters, staring down at his shoes. "I'm sorry...I forgot."

"Just make sure it doesn't happen again," she snaps under her breath, flashing Brad an ersatz smile.

"Thanks for the ride this morning!" she waves to him, and he turns around.

"Yeah, no problem," Brad has a smile playing across his lips, and I.Q. inwardly groans at what he'll say next. "Hey, I.Q.! Man, thanks for letting me ride your girl...I mean, give your girl a ride."

Her fake grin fades, and her face turns red. "Bradley!"

The dancer snickers and runs away before she can attack him with her newly manicured fingernails. "He is such a\_ candyass\_!"

"Yeah," I.Q. mumbles, slipping out of her grip. "Listen, Amber..."

"What's the matter?" She wrinkles her perfect little button-nose, and she looks so God damn \_pretty\_ that I.Q. forgets what he's about to say.

"I...uh...love you?"

"Aw, baby, I love you, too," she says a little too loudly, glancing over her shoulder. "You know what we should do? We should go out for dinner tonight!"

"That's sounds great."

"And we could go to...oh, I don't know," she taps her chin, pretending to seriously contemplate their options. "Ooh, let's go to that one diner by the laundromat!"

"You mean, the one that Duane works at?" I.Q. says wisely, and Amber blushes.

"Oh, Duane works there now?" she puts a hand to her chest, trying to look surprised. "I never knew!"

"Amber."

"I didn't!"

"\_Amber\_."

The blonde slouches, twisting her mouth in disappointment. She grabs his hand and pulls him into the girl's bathroom. Once she closes the door behind them, she says: "You know, don't you?" It's not really a question, but I.Q. nods his head anyways.

"They call me I.Q. for a reason," he says, she gives a weak smile.

"You must hate me."

"No," I.Q. assures her, although he's kind of lying. "I could never hate you."

"I'm glad," Amber says. "You're practically the only friend I have left, besides Lou Ann and Tammy."

I.Q. is surprised; he'd never really considered them to be 'friends'. "How long have you...you and Duane been going out?"

"About three months?" Amber says, biting her lip. "But, I.Q...the thing is...you can't tell anyone, okay? No one knows besides me, you, Duane."

"Your secret's safe with me," I.Q. swears, and she smiles up at him.

"I guess we should breakup," Amber says, and I.Q. nods his head in agreement.

"Yeah. I guess that we should. I don't wanna take Duane's girl, or anything. He has a lot of friends. Big, strong friends."

Amber laughs and just as she's about to say something, they both hear a toilet flush.

\* \* \*

> <div>

## 24. We All Scream for Paulie

"Your name's Paulie, right?"

He looks up from his soda and nearly chokes. The girl standing before him is probably the most gorgeous thing he'd ever seen in his entire life, and that was counting Marilyn Monroe. "Y...yes."

She giggled, sliding into his booth. It was all he could do to keep himself from fainting right then and there. Oh man, he wished his friends would be here to see this. But they were back in Texas, where he'd lived all his life until his father moved up to Baltimore. He's brought his whole family with him, and Paulie was probably the most reluctant out of all of them. But now, looking back, if he'd known the babes here were such sex pots, he wouldn't have been so unwilling.

"I'm Darla," she said, grinning. "You're the new kid on the Corny Collins Show, aren't you? The one that can do the choice Twist?"

"I guess so," Paulie blushed.

Darla tapped her fingernails against the table. "Do you like it here so far? I mean, in Baltimore? I hear you're from...Nashville?"

"Dallas, Texas," Paulie corrected. "And yeah, Baltimore's a lot different. Do you...uh, do you want me to order you a soda? Ice cream?"

"Not really," Darla shook her head. "I don't really like them."

"Well," Paulie said, confused. "Why are you in a soda shop, then?"

Darla shrugged her shoulders, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "I'm a very sociable...a people person. And this is where everybody goes after practice."

"Ah," Paulie nodded his head. "I see."

"So," Darla started. "How is Baltimore different from Dallas? Is it a good type of different?"

"Yeah," Paulie said. "It's good. But different."

"How?"

"Well, for one," Paulie said, biting the inside of his mouth. "The chicks are real foxy."

Darla giggled again, a blush tinging her cheeks. "You're hilarious."

"Thanks," Paulie said, feeling like an idiot.

"So, I'm going down to the drive-in tonight," Darla told him. "You wanna come? I hear that they're showing The Birds. It's supposed to be totally creepy."

Paulie nodded his head. "Yeah, a movie sounds fun. Pick you up at eight?"

"It's a date," Darla smiled. "I'd love to stay and talk some more, but I really have to get home."

"By all means," Paulie replied, and Darla gave him a little wave, leaving the table.

"Yep," Paulie whispered to himself. "I'm back in the game."

## 25. The Fender Bender

**\*\*A teensy-weensy vignette showing Fender and IQ's relationship.\*\***

"I'm just sayin'," Fender sighed, taking a quick sip of his milkshake. His best friend was seated next to him at their usual booth at Shaky's, pretending to listen to Fender's lady troubles. In all actuality, IQ was trying to finish the last chapter of Moby Dick. He tried not to notice as one of the waitresses, Bertha, nonchalantly walked past their table for the thirtieth time that night. IQ couldn't help but detect that she might possibly be interested in Fender. That is, if the fact that she kept practically shoving her cleavage in his face was any inclination.

"Y'know, Brenda thinks I haven't changed a bit," Fender took a bite of his burger. "That I'm still a ladies man."

"Uh, you kind of are," IQ shrugged his shoulders, turning a page. He was skimming through the book as he spoke. "I mean, just last night you took Noreen and Doreen to the drive-in theater. In different cars."

"I like to multi-task."

"Fender, you were going on two dates at once," IQ said incredulously. "Without the other girl knowing. And you don't think you're a jerk?"

"Whoa, aren't you supposed to be my best friend?" Fender joked, pulling on sleeves. "And besides, I can't help it if the ladies want some of the Fender Bender."

IQ recoiled. "Ugh."

"You don't like it?" Fender's eyebrows furrowed. "I was trying to go for very subtle sexual innuendo. But is it too subtle?"

"Do girls actually fall for that line?"

Fender shrugged. "Wouldn't you?"

IQ gave him a blank stare. "I'm not even going to dignify that with a response."

"Psh, you know you love it," Fender stretched his arms out, resting his hands on the back of his head. "The Fender Bender: breaking hearts, one babe at a time."

IQ smirked. "Sometimes even two at a time."

"That was a one time occurrence, IQ," Fender said quickly, looking a little guilty. "It's not like I'm ever going to try it again. For awhile."

IQ rolled his eyes. "Why do I even hang out with you?"

"Could it be my charming personality and my stunning good looks?"

"I think it was because I was out sick when everyone picked their friends, and I got stuck with you."

"That's a very distinct possibility," Fender grinned. Bertha walked by their table once again to rearrange the napkins, as well as to give Fender a good look at her new bra.

## 26. Kind of Smashed

**\*\*My first-ever dialogue-only chapter. I added their names in the conversation as much as possible to avoid any confusion. ;)\*\***

"Hey, Corny?"

"Hm."

"Are you okay? I mean, about what I just said."

"Huh?"

"Well, I mean, you were pretty quiet the whole time. Are you mad at me?"

"No, babe."

"Really? You're not mad?"

"Of course not."

"Oh. Because I thought you'd kill me after you found out I crashed your car."

"Amber, I could never be mad at...wait, \_what\_?"

"You weren't listening, were you? You never listen."

"I don't think \_you're\_ the one that has the right to be angry right now, Amber."

"Oh, baby, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to..."

"I thought I told you that you couldn't drive my car until \_after\_ you got your license."

"I know, it's just that it's so shiny. I love shiny things."

"Don't I know it."

"And it looked so...lonely out there. Just sitting in the driveway, all by itself. Crying."

"My car was crying?"

"It was lonely."

"Amber."

"What?"

"Have you ever considered therapy?"

"Corny!"

"How bad is the damage?"

"About that."

\_"How bad?"\_

"Um..."

\_"Amber."\_

"Well, think of it this way: you've been wanting a new car for awhile now."

"What did you do?!"

"I kind of...um...well, at first it was a little fender bender. And then I got out to give the other driver my information."

"Amber, you don't have any information. You don't have a license."

"Right. So, I was getting out the car, and I kind of forgot to turn the emergency brake on."

"What?!"

"And it kind of rolled down a hill."

"It kind of rolled down a hill?"

"And then it hit a tree at the bottom of the hill, and it kind of got smashed."

"How can a car \_kind of\_ get smashed?"

"I don't know, I was just trying to make it sound better!"

"Oh my God, Amber. Of all the things you could do...that car was my baby!"

"Yeah."

"I mean, I waxed it every weekend! I dusted the interior every night when I got home from work! I bought \_decals\_ for it! Now I'm never going to be able to put them on, Amber! The decals will forever be sitting on a shelf in my garage! I \_loved\_ that car!"

"Yeah."

"...wait a minute. You did this on purpose, didn't you?"

"What? I...I..."

"How could you?!"

"Corny, I would never do something like that!"

"You were jealous!"

"I was not!"

"You were jealous of Betty!"

"Ugh! You were obsessed with that thing! Who \_names\_ their car, Corny? Who?!"

"Uh, lots of people!"

"Name one, Corny."

"Well, okay, maybe I'm the only one. But...but...you crashed my car!"

"On accident!"

"On  
purpose!"

"Accident!"

"Purpose!"

"Accident!"

"Purpose!"

"Accident!"

"GUYS!"

"What do you want, Link?!"

"Uh, the show's starting?"

"Oh, thank you, Link. Amber, we'll talk about this later."

"Fine."

"..."

"...Amber? Why were you in Corny's dressing room?"

## 27. The Sweater

"Daaaaarllaaaaa," Lou Ann sang, tapping the teenager on the shoulder.

"Can I borrow five dollars?"

"What for?"

Lou Ann shrugged. "Uh, what else? I'm going down to the malt shop with Fender."

Somewhere from behind them, Darla heard IQ give a snort of laughter. She rolled her eyes and shook her head. "Sorry, Lou Ann. I don't have any money with me. And besides, since when are you and Fender seeing each other?"

"Since I told him Brenda started dating Brad."

"But that's not true."

It was Lou Ann's turn to roll her eyes. She hopped up onto Darla's dressing table, resting on top of her copy of Seventeen magazine. Someone with a red bow in their hair was gracing the cover, eyes staring blankly at the camera. "Thank you, Captain Obvious. Of course it's not true. But if I can convince Fender that Brenda isn't in love with him, then he'll go out with me."

"I don't think that's very..."

"Hello, ladies," Mikey walked up to the girls, bottle of Ultra-Clutch in hand. He gave himself a quick spray before tossing it over to Paulie. "Excuse me, Lou Ann: may I speak to Darla \_alone\_?"

"Smoothie," Lou Ann said, disgusted. "Anything you have to say, you can say in front of me."

"Okay," Mikey gave her a strange look before turning to Darla. "Your mom called my dad last night. She said that while she was cleaning your room, she, uh, found my sweater under your bed?"

All color drained from Darla's face. "And I was kind of wondering, well, how did it get there? 'Cuz I've never even been over to your house. And I don't remember giving you my sweater."

"...um..."

Lou Ann looked like she was trying to hold in her laughter as Darla searched for an excuse. What was she supposed to say? She couldn't tell him the truth: that she found it after the show one day and took it home. She couldn't tell him that she slept with it on over her pajamas every night. That would be just plain...creepy. "Uh, well...it must've been...oh! You know what? Edna Turnblad: she does your laundry right?"

"Well, yeah."

"She does mine too!" Darla exclaimed, hoping against hope that he'd believe her story. "Maybe she mixed our bags up or something when we came to pick them up!"

Mikey still looked confused. "But I don't have anything of yours..."



"Well, maybe she just put your sweater in my bag by accident," Darla said quickly, cutting him off. "Anyways, I'll give it to you at school tomorrow. Bye!"

"But..."

"I'll see you later!" Darla yelled, practically shoving Mikey away. After he had left the studio, Lou Ann turned to Darla, face red with laughter.

"Don't worry, I won't tell anyone," she said, and Darla gave a sigh of relief. "As long as you don't tell Brenda about Fender and me. She's such a sweat hog now, she could probably just sit on me and I'd suffocate."

## 28. Piano Lessons

**\*\*This is extremely short. Just saying.\*\***

"Uh, hey. Vicki?"

Vicki looked up from her mirror and sighed. "What do you want, Joey?"

The scrawny teenager shifted his weight from one leg to the other. Vicki rolled her eyes, applying another layer of mascara to her eyelashes. She raised her eyebrows, making it clear to Joey that she was losing her patience.

"Um, yeah. Me and the other guys were wondering if you wanted to go down to the beach later? I mean, some of us are going down to Sandy Point, and we wanted to ask--"

"Who's going?" Vicki interrupted, placing her mascara down on the dressing table.

Joey shrugged his shoulders. "So far it's just me, Bix, and IQ. But Tammy said she might come along."

Vicki pursed her lips and furrowed her eyebrows. "Um, no. Sorry. I'm busy tonight. Piano lessons."

"Oh," Joey said, a disappointed look playing across his face. "Well, that's too bad. I guess I'll go tell Brad you can't come."

"Wait. Brad's going, too?"

Joey nodded. "Yeah, he's the one that's driving us."

"Why didn't you say so?" Vicki blushed, grinning from ear to ear. "I'd love to go!"

"I thought you said you were busy," Joey said knowingly, raising his eyebrows. "With your piano lessons."

Vicki waved him off. "I cancelled."

"Right."

## 29. Girl

**\*\*A/N:** Hey, guys! Just have to say a couple of things: First of all, the lyrics in the first and last line of this vignette are from "Girl" by The Beatles (it's an awesome song). Also, there's some language in this one, so don't show this chapter to little kids :)\*\*

\_She's the kind of girl you want so much it makes you  
sorryâ€|\_

Skillet watched her as she fell back onto the couch, head thumping against the wall behind her. She winced, biting her bottom lip and giving a little whine.

"You okay?" he moved closer, reaching out to her. She nodded her head, giggling.

"I'm fiiiine," Rhonda mumbled, resting her head on a pillow. She hugged a blanket to her chest, groaning slightly. He raised his eyebrows, letting out a sigh. Rhonda had called him about an hour ago, asking him to pick her up from Stooie's house. Skillet didn't have to ask why; the way she was slurring her words told him everything he needed.

"Rhonda," he said softly, shaking his head. "I'll call your old man and tell him that you and my sister are having a sleepover, but I can't keep lying for you."

She gave a lazy laugh. "Aw, come on, Skillet."

"I'm serious," Skillet raised his voice, eyes narrowed. "You can't justâ€|expect me to cover for you every time you get blitzed, Rhonda. I don't like it."

Her eyes grew dark. "I don't give a fuck if you don't like it."

"I worry about you sometimes."

"Don't," Rhonda said, pressing her lips together. "You don't have to anymore."

"I can't help it," Skillet told her. Her expression softened, and she was quiet. The hum of Skillet's refrigerator sounded through the tiny room, and he moved away from her. He stood in the doorway, his back facing her.

"I still love you, you know." His voice was strained, barely audible. She didn't say anything.

\_â€|still you don't regret a single dayâ€|\_

## 30. I Want You

**\*\*A/N:** So, all of you guys know about my immense love for The Beatles. I was listening to this song (the official title is "I Want You (She's So Heavy)", for all of you that were wonderingâ€|if you haven't heard it, you HAVE to. The guitar in the beginning is

**\*\*\_\*\*amazing\*\*\_\*\*)**, and the idea for the story just came to me, because I'm weird. :) BTW, Jimmy is Brenda and Corny's son, in case you haven't read any of my other stories.\*\*

"Hi, Brenda. You look so beautiful today, you know."

Brenda looked up from her magazine, quirking an eyebrow at her boyfriend. She took a sip of orange juice out of her glass and watched him as he walked into the room, placing his guitar case down on the couch.

"Your dinner's in the kitchen," she told him, flipping through the pages of Vogue, not particularly interested in its content. "It got cold, so I put it on the stove."

"I mean it," Fender continued, a sly grin stretched across his lips. "You're freaking sexy."

"There's a clean plate on the counter, I think," Brenda said, smirking behind the cover of her magazine. She peered over at him, trying to hold back laughter as she saw the dejected look on his face.

"So, I was wonderingâ€"

"No."

Fender groaned. "You didn't even know what I was going to say!"

"Yes, I did," Brenda rolled her eyes, tossing the magazine onto the table. "I know you all too well."

"So, why not?" he whined, sticking his bottom lip out like a toddler. "We haven't done it in likeâ€|three days."

Brenda raised her eyebrows. "When you stop referring to having sex as 'doing it', maybe I'll reconsider."

"Aw, come on," Fender pouted, slipping into the seat next to her. "You know you love me."

"I do," Brenda said, taking another drink of juice. "But I'm not really in the mood."

"Butâ€|how about if I turn on some Marvin Gaye?"

"Fender, I swear to God."

"It worked last time!"

Brenda sighed heavily, staring out the window. "Do you hear that?"

Fender furrowed his eyebrows. "Uh, no. I don't hear anything."

"Jimmy's crying," she said simply, standing from her seat and walking out of the room. Fender rolled his eyes, crossing his arms across his chest. And thenâ€|

"Wait, I thought Jimmy was over at Tammy's house?"

### 31. Dreamboat Much?

**\*\*A/N:** The following is what would happen if everyone's favorite Baltimoreans got their hands on IM (in my mind, at least :D). It's AU, I guess, because it takes place during present times.  
**\*\***

**\*\*Iwearmascara:** Link**\*\***

**\*\*Bamf45:** Tracy**\*\***

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:** Seaweed**\*\***

**\*\*Fenderender:** Fender**\*\***

**\*\*Biblefreak:** Penny**\*\***

**\*\*TheBrad:** Brad**\*\***

**\*\*Cautionarywhale:** Brenda**\*\***

**\*\*Iwearmascara** has joined the chat**\*\***

**\*\*Iwearmascara:** **\*\*hey, is anyone here?**

**\*\*Bamf45** has joined the chat**\*\***

**\*\*Bamf45:** **\*\*Hi! Who is this?**

**\*\*Iwearmascara:** **\*\*It's Link. Who's this?**

**\*\*Bamf45:** **\*\*Hey, baby! It's Tracy!**

**\*\*Bamf45:** **\*\*What's up with your SN? You wear mascara?**

**\*\*Bamf45:** **\*\*â€|**

**\*\*Iwearmascara:** **\*\*Um, no. It's a joke. Yeah. :)**

**\*\*Bamf45:** **\*\*Oh.**

**\*\*Chocolatesensation** has joined the chat**\*\***

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:** **\*\*Hey, Cracker Boy. Tracy.**

**\*\*Bamf45:** **\*\*OMFG SEAWEEEEEEED! How are you, this beautiful sunshine day?**

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:** **\*\*I'm good. How are you?**

**\*\*Bamf45:** **\*\*I'm on such an adrenaline rush right now!**

**\*\*Iwearmascara:** **\*\*â€|?**

**\*\*Bamf45:** **\*\*I totally beat up this girl that was on ANTM! She was**

soooo mean.

**Iwear mascara:** **That's really hot. :D**

**Chocolatesensation:** **Um, ew.**

**Biblefreak** has joined the chat

**Biblefreak:** **Hi, guys!**

**Iwear mascara:** **Hey. Who's this?**

**Biblefreak:** **Penny. I'm using my mom's IM account.**

**Chocolatesensation:** **Hey, baby. :)**

**Chocolatesensation:** **€|your mom has IM?**

**Biblefreak:** **Yeah, she uses it whenever she goes on Christian chat rooms.**

**Iwear mascara:** **Dude, that's kind of weird.**

**Bamf45:** **Hey, Penny! OMG, did you guys hear about Brenda?**

**Iwear mascara:** **€|?**

**Chocolatesensation:** **No. What happened?**

**Bamf45:** **She like, had her baby this morning.**

**Iwear mascara:** **Yawn.**

**Chocolatesensation:** **Dude, you're so catty.**

**Iwear mascara:** **Whatevs. Was it a boy or a girl?**

**Bamf45:** **I dunno. But I heard it was, like, black.**

**Biblefreak:** **?**

**Biblefreak:** **That's so random. I thought it was Corny's.**

**Bamf45:** **Yeah, so did I??**

**Iwear mascara:** **So if it's not Corny's, whose is it?**

**Chocolatesensation:** **I had nothing to do with that.**

**Iwear mascara:** **LOL**

**Biblefreak:** **Oh, I have some gossip.**

**Iwear mascara:** **OMG, girl, DISH!!**

\*\*Chocolatesensation: \*\*â€|

\*\*Biblefreak: \*\*Guess who I saw at the GAP today?

\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Ew, you shop at the GAP?

\*\*Chocolatesensation: \*\*You got a problem with where my baby shops?

\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Noâ€|

\*\*Biblefreak: \*\*I kid you not; Amber Von Tussle.

\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*OMG, I \_KNEW\_ IT! I knew that dress she wore last week was a knock-off!

\*\*Chocolatesensation: \*\*â€|really, Link. It's getting harder and harder to be friends with you.

\*\*Fenderbender has joined the chat\*\*

\*\*Cautionarywhale has joined the chat\*\*

\*\*TheBrad has joined the chat\*\*

\*\*Cautionarywhale: \*\*Hi, guys!

\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Why is your baby black?

\*\*Cautionarywhale: \*\*Um, wtf?

\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Didn't you have your baby this morning?

\*\*Cautionarywhale: \*\*Jimmy was born a couple of months ago...and he's not black\*\*.\*\*

\*\*Cautionarywhale: \*\*??

\*\*Bamf45: \*\*Brad told me that you had it this morning, and that he was black.

\*\*Cautionarywhale: \*\*Okayyyyy. Wtf, Brad?

\*\*TheBrad: \*\*I was just joking around. Sorry.

\*\*TheBrad is rolling his eyes.\*\*

\*\*Biblefreak: \*\*Congrats on the baby, Brenda!

\*\*Cautionarywhale: \*\*Thanks! :)

\*\*TheBrad: \*\*Hey, Fenderâ€question.

\*\*Fenderbender: \*\*What?

\*\*TheBrad: \*\*What does one have to do to sleep with Brenda Wheeler?

\*\*Fenderbender: \*\*â€|

**\*\*Fenderbender: \*\***Why the fuck would you ask me that question?

**\*\*TheBrad: \*\***Jesus, I was just wondering. SORRY.

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\***LOL, you basically have to be alive. And be a guy. That's pretty much it.

**\*\*Cautionarywhale: \*\***WTF you guys?!

**\*\*Cautionarywhale has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*Fenderbender: \*\***What the hell? You guys suck.

**\*\*Fenderbender has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*Chocolatesensation: \*\***That was kind of messed up, guys**\*\*.\*\***

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\***Psh, Brenda knows we're kidding.

**\*\*TheBrad: \*\***Yeah. Dude, we burned her SO GOOD. VIRTUAL HIGH FIVE!

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\***Hi-fives!

**\*\*Bamf45: \*\***Oh my gosh, you guys are so immature.

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** But about Brenda--that's actually pretty accurate.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** True.

**\*\*Biblefreak: \*\***...

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** How would you know?

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** My momma's calling me. BRB.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation is away\*\***

**\*\*TheBrad:\*\*** Oh, dude. Fender's standing outside my bedroom window.

**\*\*Iwearmascara\*\*:** ?

**\*\*TheBrad:\*\*** He has a baseball bat. Maybe he wants to go play baseball?

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\***Probably.

**\*\*TheBrad:\*\*** Yeah, he's waving at me and shouting something about balls. See you guys later! :D

**\*\*TheBrad has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** Oh, crap. My mom's home. I have to go. :(

**\*\*Bamf45:\*\*** Bye, Penny! We'll talk about my problems later!  
:)

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** YAY! :D :D :D Bye, guys!

**\*\*Biblefreak** has left the chat

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** Okay, guys, I'm going to go. Talk to you later.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation** has left the chat

**\*\*Bamf45:\*\*** Looks like it's just you and me, Link. :)

**\*\*Bamf45:\*\*** €|

**\*\*Bamf45:\*\*** Link?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Oh, sorry. I was watching the Tyra show. That girl is like, my new God. LOL

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** She's doing an episode about plucking eyebrows. It's totally informative. And next episode she's talking about finding the right pair of jeans on tight budgets. OMG I can't wait.

**\*\*Bamf45:\*\*** LOL.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Why are you laughing? I was serious.

**\*\*Bamf45:\*\*** Oh.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** OMG, I have to go. Chris Brown is the musical guest!! Dreamboat much?

**\*\*Iwearmascara** has left the chat

**\*\*Bamf45** has left the chat

**\*\*Another A/N:** I wasn't planning to post it tonight, but I am because apparently my grandma is spending the night at her boyfriend's house (there's a pleasant image for all of you, haha) even though we had a PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT, aka a sleepover, planned. Yeah, I sleep over at my grandma's sometimes, and I LIKE IT. Jealous? I swear to God, I'll go all Nikki Blonsky on your ass. :D

## 32. OMJ

**\*\*A/N:** Okay, so I couldn't resist doing another one of these. They're just too much fun to write! And, remember, I love **\*\*\_\*\*all\*\*\_\*\*** these characters to death (except Bianca from ANTM :D), so my jokes are not meant to be offensive towards any of them (ehem, Link, haha). Still AU because it takes place in 2008.

**\*\*((Iwearmascara: Link\*\***

**\*\*Bamf45: Tracy\*\***



**\*\*Biblefreak: Penny\*\***

**\*\*Chocolatesensation: Seaweed\*\***

**\*\*Fenderbender: Fender\*\***

**\*\*Cautionarywhale: Brenda\*\***

**\*\*TripleE: Edna\*\***

**\*\*Mike27: Amber\*\***

**\*\*SexiestManAlive: Corny))\*\***

**\*\*Iwearmascara has joined the chat\*\***

**\*\*Fenderbender has joined the chat\*\***

**\*\*Iwearmascara\*\*:** \_Loves\_ your new haircut.

**\*\*Fenderbender:\*\*** Um, thanks?

**\*\*Iwearmascara\*\*:** It totally brings out your eyes. So gorgeous. OMG.

**\*\*Fenderbender\*\*:** Larkin, you're kinda creeping me out.

**\*\*Iwearmascara\*\*:** OMG, I'm just complimenting you! Jesus! Why do always have to do this?!

**\*\*Fenderbender\*\*:** What are you talking about?

**\*\*Iwearmascara\*\*:** Every time I say something nice about you, you freak out! Like, last year, when I told you that you had a nice ass! You totally flipped!

**\*\*Fenderbender\*\*:** That's because after you said that, you \_grabbed\_ my ass. I still have nightmares.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive has joined the chat\*\***

**\*\*SexiestManAlive: \*\*Howdy, boys!**

**\*\*Fenderbender:\*\*** â€|

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*â€|**

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*OMFG, Corny. No one says 'howdy' anymore.**

**\*\*Fenderbender: \*\*Yeah.**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive: \*\*Gee whiz, fellas. Can't you give a cat a break?**

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*OMG, I didn't understand a word of that.**

**\*\*Fenderbender: \*\*Lyk srsly.**

**Iwearmascara:** **What is this, the '60s?**

**SexiestManAlive:** **OMG, did you hear about Tracy's fight with that girl from ANTM?**

**Iwearmascara:** **OMG, yes. Isn't that so hot?**

**SexiestManAlive:** **LOL, girl, let me tell you! I looked at a picture of the girl from ANTM that was taken before the fight, and it STILL looks like someone punched her in the face!**

**Iwearmascara:** **OMG GIRL SCANDALOUS**

**SexiestManAlive:** **You know it! I'm such a bitch, haha!**  
:D

**Fenderbender:** **â€|**

**Fenderbender:** **Uh, yeah, sorry guys, but I have to go. Jimmy needs food, or something.**

**Fenderbender has left the chat**

**SexiestManAlive:** **Looks like it's just you and me,**  
Link.

**SexiestManAlive:** **â€|**

**Iwearmascara:** **Sorry, watching Tyra.**

**SexiestManAlive:** **OMG, is it the jeans episode?**

**Iwearmascara:** **YES**

**SexiestManAlive:** **I don't have a TV in my dressing room**  
:(

**SexiestManAlive:** **What's going on?**

**Iwearmascara:** **Tyra's talking about her booty.**

**Bamf45 has joined the chat**

**Biblefreak has joined the chat**

**Bamf45:** **Hi, guys! :D :D :D :D :D :D**

**Biblefreak:** **Hi! I don't have much time to talk, because my mom'll be home soon. She went to the store to get 'stronger ropes'.**  
:(

**Bamf45:** **OMG, my mom is totally trying to make me go to shopping with her today. :(**

**Biblefreak:** **Aw, I'm sorry. That sucks.**

**Bamf45:** **I know! My life is so horrible.**

**Iwearmascara:** **Oooh, can I come with? I've been meaning to buy**

more mascara.

**Biblefreak:** "€|

**Iwearmascara:** "For my mom.

**Bamf45:** "Oh. Yeah, you should totally come! We can make out in the bathroom while my mom tries on bras!

**SexiestManAlive:** "€|

**SexiestManAlive:** "That's an image I didn't need this early in the morning.

**Chocolatesensation** has joined the chat

**Mike27** has joined the chat

**Chocolatesensation:** "Hey.

**Biblefreak:** "Hi, Seaweed! :) Are we still on for today?

**Chocolatesensation:** "Yeah. :) But it might take a couple of hours longer to do my hair.

**Iwearmascara:** "...Even I don't take that long.

**Chocolatesensation:** "This level of perfection doesn't come easy.

**TripleE** has joined the chat

**TripleE:** "Hi, guys! I'm Tracy's mom! Edna Turnblad!

**Bamf45:** "€|Mom.

**TripleE:** "TRACY!

**Bamf45:** "Get. Off. The. Computer.

**Mike27:** "Hello.

**Biblefreak:** "Um, hi?

**SexiestManAlive:** "Howdy!

**Iwearmascara:** "Dude, stop saying that.

**TripleE:** "Who's this?

**Mike27:** "My name is Mike.

**TripleE:** "Mike?

**Mike27:** "Yes, Mike.

**TripleE:** "Mike who?

**\*\*Mike27: \*\*IT'S MIKE!**

**\*\*Chocolatesensation\*\*: I don't know any Mikes.**

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Yeah, neither do I.**

**\*\*Mike27: \*\*â€|**

**\*\*Mike27 has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Well, that was weird.**

**\*\*Cautionarywhale has joined the chat\*\***

**\*\*Cautionarywhale: \*\*Hi, guys!**

**\*\*Bamf45: \*\*Hi, Brenda!**

**\*\*TripleE: \*\*Aren't you the girl at Tracy's school that got knocked up?**

**\*\*Cautionarywhale:\*\* â€|**

**\*\*Bamf45: \*\*OMG, Mom, you can't just ask people that question.**

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Well, it's true.**

**\*\*Cautionarywhale has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*Bamf45: \*\*Link!**

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Oh, come on. She totally set that joke up!**

**\*\*Chocolatesensation: \*\*How? She didn't even say anything!**

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*â€|**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive: \*\*Can we change the subject?**

**\*\*TripleE:\*\* Guess what?**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* What?**

**\*\*TripleE:\*\* Fender's standing outside my house.**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive: \*\*Srsly?**

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Maybe he wants to play baseball?**

**\*\*TripleE: \*\*No, he's holding a hockey stick.**

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\*Oh. How come he never wants to play any games with me?**

**\*\*TripleE: \*\*I don't know. I'm going to go see if I still have my old hockey equipment in the basement.**

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\***You played hockey?

**\*\*TripleE: \*\***World champion! :D Tracy, come help me.

**\*\*TripleE has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*Bamf45 has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** â€|Penny? Are you still there?

**\*\*Chocolatesensation\*\*:** â€|

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** Yeah. I have to go, though. My mom just drove up.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation\*\*:** Hey, I'm coming over.

**\*\*Biblefreak\*\*:** Butâ€|my mom's here. She'll, like, kick your ass.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** That's for the concern, Penny, but I doubt your mom canâ€|

**\*\*Iwearmascara\*\*:** Oh, she can. Last week, she put me in the hospital.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** Uh, how about I meet you in the park at six?

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** Sounds good to me.

**\*\*Biblefreak has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*Chocolatesensation has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*SexiestManAlive: \*\***Well, I guess it's just us again.

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\***OMG, Tyra is showing off her cellulite.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive: \*\***Um, why?

**\*\*Iwearmascara: \*\***I don't know. She was talking to this jean expert, and then all of a sudden she took off her pants.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive: \*\***Oh, that Tyra! :D

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** Who's the musical guest today?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Ugh, it's Celine Dion.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** BORING.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Agreed!

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** But tomorrow, the musical guest isâ€|

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* ??**

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* THE JONAS BROTHERS!**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* OMJ!**

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* I KNOW!**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* I haven't seen them for like, twenty minutes! I'm suffering from Jonas withdrawal. :(**

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* Who's your favorite?**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* DUH, it's Joe.**

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* OMJ, what about Nick? Adorable times ten. And he's the most talented. He plays like, five hundred instruments.**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* Whatevs. Joe is totally talented.**

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* At what? Playing the tambourine?**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* SHUT UP! YOU DON'T KNOW HIS LIFE!**

**\*\*SexiestManAlive has left the chat\*\***

**\*\*Iwearmascara has left the chat\*\***

A/N: Okay, the next chapter will be normal, I promise. :D

### 33. Red

**\*\*A/N: I haven't been calling you guys bitchin' lately. So, you guys are bitchin'. :) \*\***

Sketch woke up to the sound of little girls playing jump rope and the smell of spoiled milk. He looked outside, and the sun looked red. Red like a candy apple, maybe, but it looked more like blood and burn marks and everything that was wrong with the world. He rolled off his bed, listening to the springs in his mattress groan out. Grabbing a white shirt from the floor, he pulled it over his head. His ears were pounding against his skull, and he felt like someone shot him between the eyes.

He walked down the hallway into the kitchen, where his sister was standing over the stove making oatmeal. His grandmother was sitting at the table, reading her newspaper and muttering something under her breath about the war. Sketch hoped they didn't realize how his eyes were bloodshot. He prayed to Jesus and God and anyone else who will listen to him that his grandmother won't try to make conversation. Sketch's prayers were answered, and they ate their oatmeal in silence.

Sometimes, Sketch watched tapings of the Corny Collins Show while he

ate breakfast. His grandmother didn't want him to because she said it would just depress him. He was one of the first to be kicked off the show when it was integrated, due to the fact that they couldn't afford to keep all the kids. Sketch still remembered the day Corny broke it to him and some of the others; a few of the girls had cried, but he just packed up his things with his usual stoic expression. He and Bix had smoked some weed in the studio's back parking lot, until Darla had shown up and threatened to call the cops.

"You'll be late to work," his grandmother said in her crackly voice, not even bothering to look up from her coffee. He made a sound of understanding, slowly standing from his seat and leaving his half-empty bowl of hot cereal behind. And a few moments later, he was out the door and walking through the neighborhood and trying to ignore the glares that are coming his way.

"Ay, man!" Sketch saw Seaweed running towards him, basketball in hand. "You up for a game?"

"Aw, I don't know," Sketch answered, shrugging his shoulders. "I have work."

Seaweed rolled his eyes, punching his friend lightly on the shoulder. "Man, when are you gonna quit workin' at that candy store?"

"What's so bad about Wheeler's Candies? I've been working there since I was fifteen."

"Sketch, you're never gonna get any if you're working at a candy store. Now, if you work down at the record shopâ€¦"

"Man, I know you're only asking me because you'll get a bonus for every new employee you bring in," Sketch raised his eyebrows, and Seaweed laughed.

"True. But honestly, it's a real swingin' place to work, you know?"

"Did you just say swingin'?" Sketch grinned, shaking his head. "You've been spending too much time with Link, man."

"Also true," Seaweed dribbled the ball. "Hey, have you seen Janetta around?"

Sketch choked on his own spit. "No! No, no. No. Why would I've seen Janetta around? It's not like a follow her around, or anything. Jeez, Seaweed. Like, why would you even ask that question?"

"Okay, you need to calm down," Seaweed held back laughter, shooting his friend a look. Sketch nodded his head, taking a deep breath. "I was just asking because she borrowed one of my records, and I needed it back for tonight. But damn. If you want to make it obvious you got a thing for herâ€¦"

"I do not have a thing for Janetta," Sketch said unconvincingly. "I mean, like, what? Where are you getting this stuff? Seriously, me and Janetta: no. She's just a friend. Not even a friend. More like an acquaintance."

"Sure, Sketch," Seaweed rolled his eyes. He took the basketball in his hands and placed it over his shoulder, rolling it behind his back. "You playing or not? Brotha, I ain't got all day."

"Fine," Sketch said, grabbing the ball and faking a shot. "You're about to get served."

Seaweed furrowed his eyebrows, and Sketch immediately stopped his movements.

"Man, never say that again."

#### 34. You're So Damn Hot

"I'm so damn hot."

IQ rolled his eyes at his best friend. He was stretched out across his bed, trying to finish all of his work before the weekend started, while Fender was standing in front of his mirror and admiring his reflection.

"I mean, holy shit," Fender said, smirking. He put his hands on his hips, turning around to check out his backside. "I am a fucking Adonis."

"Uh huh," IQ muttered, letting out a sigh. He closed his textbook and glanced at Fender. "Aren't you supposed to be doing something?"

"What could be more important than this?" Fender joked, winking at himself through the mirror. IQ fought the urge to smash the mirror over Fender's head.

"Man, you're turning into Link," IQ wrinkled his nose, and Fender quickly turned away from the mirror. "You're supposed to be finishing your half of the history project. You know, the presentation we're going to give on Monday that will determine a quarter of our final grade?"

"You're such a geek sometimes," Fender said with disgust, sliding onto IQ's dresser. "What's the presentation on again?"

"\_Fender\_! I swear to God, I will--"

"Relax," Fender laughed. "I was teasing. So, what do you want me to say?"

"\_You're\_ supposed to come up with that \_yourself\_," IQ told him, furrowing his eyebrows. "What were you doing in class today? We had, like, two hours to organize our presentation."

Fender shrugged his shoulders. "I wasn't totally unproductive. I managed to score Lacey Patterson's phone number, and she's a total prude."

"Wow."

"I know, right? I'm a miracle worker," Fender grinned, missing the sarcasm in IQ's voice. He hopped off the dresser and once again



approached mirror, flexing. "It's definitely the biceps."

**\*\*A/N:** Speaking of biceps, haha, root for Michael Phelps when you watch the Olympics. My mom is a super-crazed fan (she was obsessed with him back before Athens, seriously), and she even has a t-shirt with his face on it :P So cheer for my mom's boyfriend.\*\*

### 35. West Side Story

\_"Oh, God, Trace..."\_

\_"Oh, Link..."\_

"Uh, Penny?" Seaweed whispered, his fingers gripping the armrest with a frightening intensity. The dorky girl sipped some of her soda pop and nodded her head, eyes fixed on the gigantic movie screen in front of her. They'd been planning this movie night for weeks, and Seaweed had even worn the tie Penny gave him on his birthday. This was supposed to be their night, and he had been less than thrilled when Penny had invited Tracy and Link to join them at the last minute. He had been even less thrilled when they'd accepted. And now that they were getting busy \_right behind to him\_ (the last time he'd had enough courage to glance over at them, Tracy had been sitting on Link's lap), he was downright furious.

"What, baby?"

He turned to look at her, a disgusted look on his face. "Are you sure you don't want to move?"

"Of course," Penny said, furrowing her eyebrows. "These are good seats, Seaweed."

"But..." The dancer couldn't bring himself to look over at the couple sitting behind to him. "I'm going to have nightmares."

Penny rolled her eyes, putting her hand on Seaweed's leg. "Just ignore them."

He sighed, but didn't say anything else. He tried focusing on the movie, and for a few minutes, he actually was getting into it. And just when the protagonist was about to tell his girl how he felt about her, Tracy elbowed him in the back of his head. His head whipped around, and to his horror, he saw that she had ripped off her sweater.

"Hey, Cracker Boy," Seaweed hissed, causing Link and Tracy to pause in their actions. "Do you mind?"

"Nope," Link said, and he and Tracy resumed their makeout session. Seaweed shuddered, once again turning to Penny.

"Baby, I'm scared."

"Of what? It's \_West Side Story\_, Seaweed."

"Not of the movie," Seaweed gestured to Link and Tracy. "Although the Jets kind of creep me out with their snapping."

### 36. Micheal Phelps' Swim Cap

\_Mmmkay, I have to holla to my favorite bitches. :) Credit goes to the absolutely fabulous hippogriff-tamer for the Michael Phelps idea. She is seriously one of my biggest sources of inspiration for these IM chapters.\_

\_Also, LC: you rock. Like, hardcore. Thank you very, very much for all the shout-outs, haha.\_

\*\*((Iwearmascara: Link\*\*

\*\*Bamf45: Tracy\*\*

\*\*Biblefreak: Penny\*\*

\*\*Chocolatesensation: Seaweed\*\*

\*\*Fenderbender: Fender\*\*

\*\*Cautionarywhale: Brenda\*\*

\*\*TripleE: Edna\*\*

\*\*Mike27: Amber\*\*

\*\*SexiestManAlive: Corny))\*\*

\*\*Iwearmascara has joined the chat\*\*

\*\*SexiestManAlive has joined the chat\*\*

\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* hey, Corny, did you watch the Olympics?

\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* That was this month?

\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* Oh my God.

\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* Well, I'm SORRY. I have more important things to worry about.

\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* Like your hair?

\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* â€|yes. And my new girlfriend.

\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* â€|?

\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* Duh, I'm going out with Amber now.

\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* Umâ€|she's with Shelley.

\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\* No, she isn't.

\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\* â€|yeah, she IS. I saw them together this morning at school.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** What?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Yeah, it was total PDA. Like, get a room, not everyone wants to watch you make out.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Except for Brad. He was like, staring at them. And drooling.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** EWWWWW, what a creep

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** ikr?

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** So, why did you bring up the Olympics?

**\*\*Chocolatesensation has joined the chat\*\***

**\*\*Biblefreak has joined the chat\*\***

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Two words: Michael Phelps.

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** OMFG HE IS SO HAWT

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** â€|

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** Sorry, baby. But it's true.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** I guess so. He's kinda a butterface, though.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** BUT OMG HE IS SO FREAKING MUSCULAR

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** I ain't mad at that!

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Lol, ikr?

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** Like, he's more ripped than Kurt Cobain's jeans. Haha, get it?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** â€|

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** â€|

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** â€|

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** Never mind.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Okay, so when I was in Beijingâ€|

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** You went to China?

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** What? When was this?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** OMG, I was gone for like, a month. You didn't notice?

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** Umâ€|yes?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Whatevs. Back to the story.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Okay, so after the last race, I followed Michael Phelps into the locker room.

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** â€|

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** And then, I was about to steal his Speedo when he was taking a shower.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** Wow.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** But the coach came in and totally threw me out!!llone

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** OMG, what a spoil sport.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** ikr? So, anyways, I followed him when he went to go talk to his mom. And he gave her his swim cap as a token of his appreciation.

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** Aw, that's sweet.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** And I stole it from her in the parking lot.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** â€|

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** Wow, wtf?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** It's not like I hurt her, or anything. I just stole the swim cap.

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** That's still messed.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** OMJ, do you know how much that could go for on eBay?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** I know, right? But I want to keep it to myselfâ€|

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** â€|?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** You promise not to tell anyone?

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** Psh, of course not.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** I swear to God, if you're getting ready to press "Print Screen"â€|

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** OMG, just tell me!

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Okay.  
Iâ€|smelliteverynightbeforeIgotobed

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** You smell Michael Phelps' swim cap? Every night?

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** Um, stalker much?

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** YOU DON'T KNOW MY LIFE

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** OMJ, I do the same exact thing with Joe Jonas' headband!

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** WTF?

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** Okay, so I went to one of their concerts, and Joe threw me his headband! I keep it in one of my desk drawers, and if I'm having a bad day, I take it out and talk to it!

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** â€|you talk to it?

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** Yes! It is SUCH a stress reliever, OMG.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Psh, whatever. Nick's better.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** OMG NO HE ISN'T

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** Not this again.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** Yes, this again. He WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** Bitch, I understand plenty. Nick has the voice of an ANGEL.

**\*\*SexiestManAlive:\*\*** YEAH, AN ANGEL THAT HASN'T GONE THROUGH PUBERTY.

**\*\*Iwearmascara:\*\*** BITCH!

**\*\*Iwearmascara** has left the chat

**\*\*SexiestManAlive** has left the chat

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** Soâ€|

**\*\*Biblefreak:\*\*** Wanna make out?

**\*\*Chocolatesensation:\*\*** Okay!

**\*\*Chocolatesensation** has left the chat

**\*\*Biblefreak** has left the chat

37. Done

"Hi."

Fender's voice sounded cold, heavy distant. She bit her lip, wondering what he would do if she just ignored him. But he was blocking her way, and she had no other choice but to stand and listen.

"We...need to talk. About what happened."

A long, painful silence. She prayed that Velma would interrupt them, tell them they were needed on stage.

"I want you to know that I'm sorry. It was a mistake."

If there was one thing she hadn't wanted him to say, it was that. She pressed her lips together to keep from speaking up.

"And I would give anything for it to...what I mean to say is, I wish it hadn't happened. I mean, I have a girlfriend, you know? And I know you feel the same way about it."

She didn't. But she didn't say anything, just stared at him. The back of her throat started to ache, and she clutched the fabric of her skirt.

"And I think we should just pretend it never happened. It was...a one night thing, and it didn't mean anything. It still doesn't mean anything. So let's just forget about it."

She forced herself to nod her head.

"Okay. Well. I guess...I guess I'll see you around, Tammy?"

"Yeah."

### 38. Gossip

**\*\*\_This probably makes absolutely no sense.\_\*\***

"So," Lou Ann started, raising her eyebrows and suppressing a giggle. She put her fingers to her lips and watched her friend with fascination. "What happened?"

Brenda shrugged her shoulders, a coy smile stretched across her lips. Lou Ann sipped some of her chocolate malt, and as she spoke again, her voice was lowered considerably.

"So...did you, you know?"

The brunette sat up straighter, clasping her hands and putting them in her lap. "A lady never kisses and tells." That was a lie.

Lou Ann giggled, a blush spread across her cheeks. "You are absolutely crazy."

Reaching into her purse, Brenda pulled out a cufflink and placed it on the table. "He gave me that last night. He said that it was token of his love." Another lie.

"Aw, that is so romantic," Lou Ann said gleefully, biting her bottom lip.

Brenda smiled softly, trying to bury the guilt that was building up in her stomach. "I know. You can't tell anyone, though. I don't want anyone to know." This was, of course, yet another lie. The only reason she was telling Lou Ann, the class gossip, was to make sure

that it was all over school by Monday.

### 39. In Which Link Becomes a Handyman

In Which Link Becomes a Handyman

"Oh, hey Seaweed! You'll never guess what just happened."

Link walked into the record shop, closing the door behind him. He wore an excited expression on his face, and his hands were held up in the air as a sign for everyone to stop what they were doing and listen. Seaweed ignored him, continuing to organize the records with only a nod in Link's direction as a greeting.

"Okay," Link quickly turned to Penny, who was sitting on the couch with Tracy. "You'll never guess what just happened."

Tracy shrugged. "What happened?"

"...You're not even going to guess?"

"Link."

The crooner sighed exasperatedly, rolling his eyes. "Fine. I was walking over here, and I saw this flyer on a window."

"Really?" Seaweed furrowed his eyebrows. "That's amazing."

"Anyways," Link continued, ignoring his friend. "It was this old guy, looking for someone him fix stuff around his house."

Penny took a sip of the lemonade in her hand. "Oh, that's nice, I guess."

"You guys don't get it!" Link exclaimed, shaking his head. "I took the job!"

"But, Cracker Boy," Seaweed said slowly, walking away from the record bins. "You don't know anything about being a handyman."

"Of course I do," Link scoffed, narrowing his eyes at Seaweed. "I'm a man. And I have hands. Duh."

"Wow."

Tracy wrinkled her nose. "Well, babe, Seaweed has a point. I mean, just last week, you failed your woodshop final."

"Maybe Mr. Erickson shouldn't make his finals so impossible to pass."

Seaweed widened his eyes. "Link, you only had to make a shelf."

"Well, it was hard!" Link yelled, putting his hands on his hips. "I can't believe you guys! Ever since they kicked us off the show, I've been miserable. I'm one of those guys that has to have a job to be happy, you know? I thought you guys would be glad for me; that I was

doing something with my life."

"I am happy, baby," Tracy said, walking over to Link and placing a hand on his shoulder. "But, well, I'm just not sure if being a handyman is the best job for you. Maybe you'd be better suited as a hairdresser, or something."

\_\*\*That made absolutely no sense. But, I actually have an excuse this time! I'm on Codeine (however you spell it). Yep.\*\*\_

End  
file.